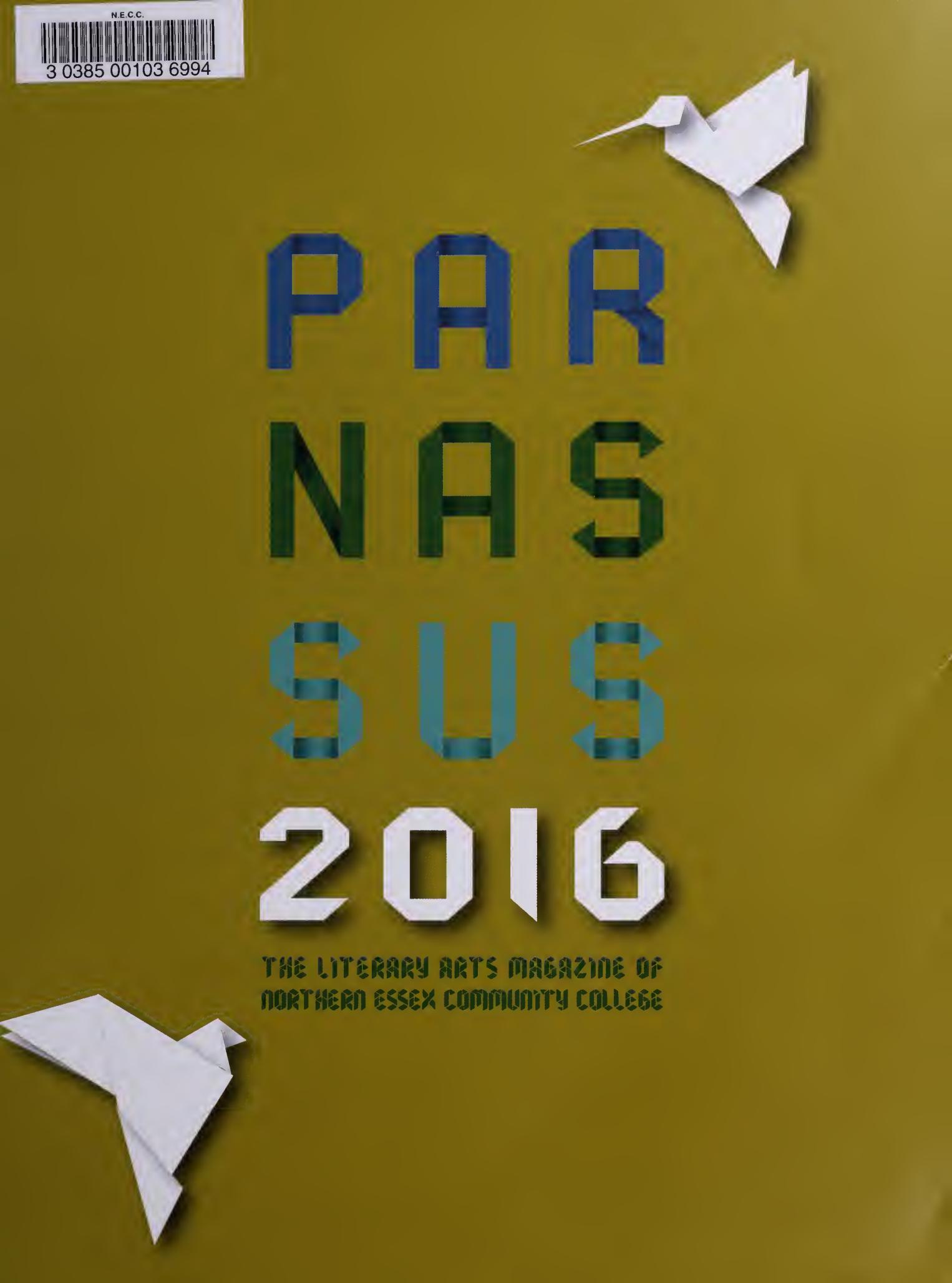


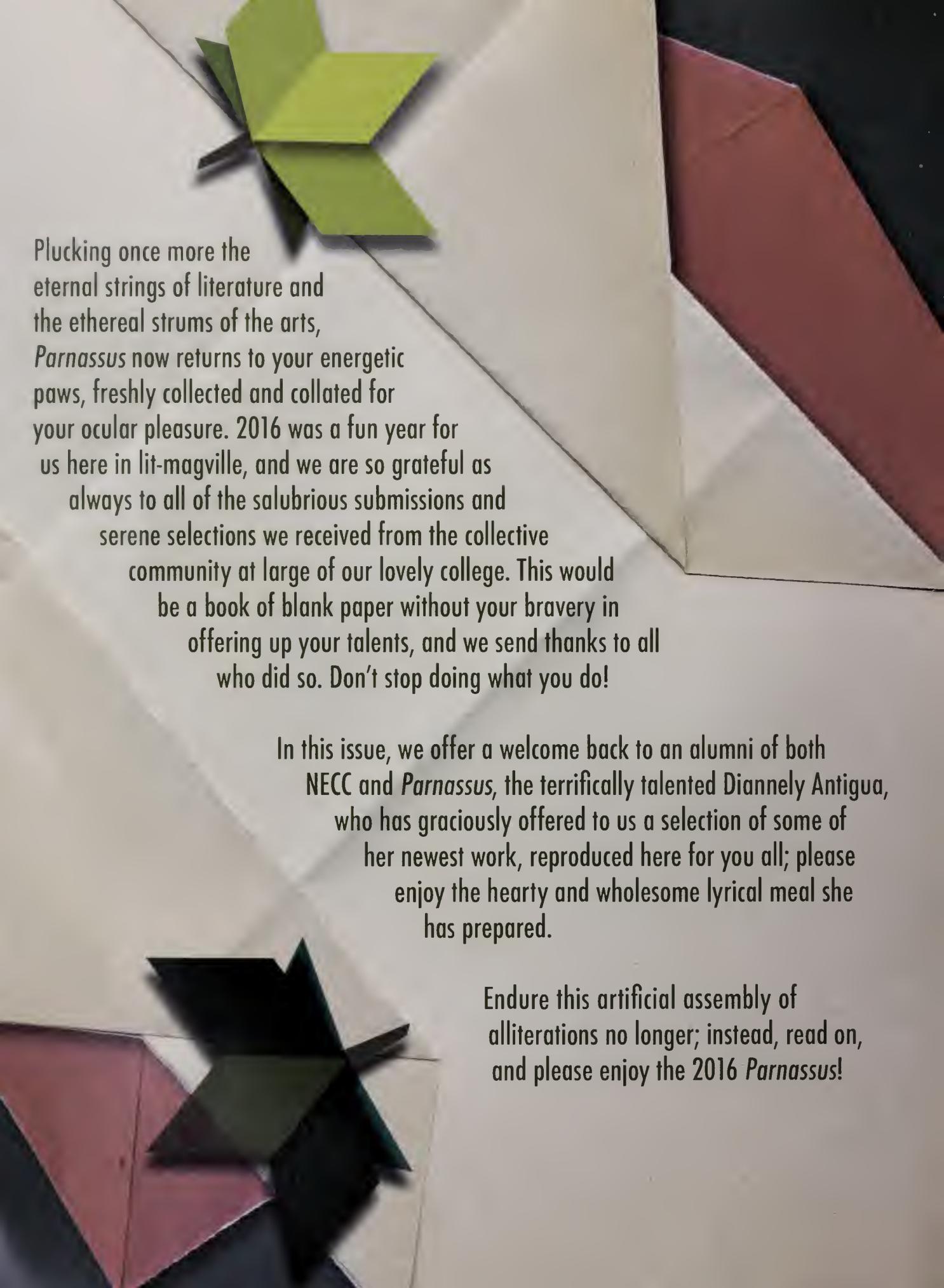
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PAR NAS SUS 2016

THE LITERARY ARTS MAGAZINE OF
NORTHERN ESSEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE



Plucking once more the
eternal strings of literature and
the ethereal strums of the arts,
Parnassus now returns to your energetic
paws, freshly collected and collated for
your ocular pleasure. 2016 was a fun year for
us here in lit-magville, and we are so grateful as
always to all of the salubrious submissions and
serene selections we received from the collective
community at large of our lovely college. This would
be a book of blank paper without your bravery in
offering up your talents, and we send thanks to all
who did so. Don't stop doing what you do!

In this issue, we offer a welcome back to an alumni of both
NECC and *Parnassus*, the terrifically talented Diannely Antigua,
who has graciously offered to us a selection of some of
her newest work, reproduced here for you all; please
enjoy the hearty and wholesome lyrical meal she
has prepared.

Endure this artificial assembly of
alliterations no longer; instead, read on,
and please enjoy the 2016 *Parnassus*!

PARNASSUS AWARDS

NORTHERN ESSEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE
100 ELLIOTT STREET, HAVERHILL, MA

WWW.PARNASSUSLITMAG.COM

COMMUNITY COLLEGE HUMANITIES ASSOCIATION

First Place: 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010, 2009

Second Place: 2008

ASSOCIATED COLLEGIATE PRESS PACESETTER AWARDS

Best in Nation, Two-year Colleges: 2011

Finalist: 2013, 2009

COLUMBIA SCHOLASTIC PRESS ASSOCIATION

Gold Crown: 2011

Silver Crown: 2010

AMERICAN SCHOLASTIC PRESS ASSOCIATION

First Place with Merit: 2009, 2008

First Place: 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010

Best Gallery: 2008

Best Page Design: 2010

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS PARAGON AWARDS

Gold: 2011

Silver: 2009

Artists

DRYS OF 1996
THURSDAY IN BUSHWICK
WHILE LOOKING THROUGH PHOTO ALBUMS
METAL WOMAN
UNEARNED SPRING
PHOTO
UNIVERSITY AT NIGHT
PHOTO
DRAWING
HOW THE COWARDLY LION GREW HIS MANE
DRAWING
THERE SHE SITS
MURKY AND BROWN
SCULPTURE
SINNERS
PHOTOS
MUMBLE
TIME
TINDER
PHOTO
A BARD'S QUEST
LEAVING (THE WOODS)
PHOTO
PHOTO

Diannelly Antigua	6
Diannelly Antigua	7
Diannelly Antigua	7
Jessica Angelini	8
Sarah Courchesne	11
Helen Shiepe	12
Grant Tyler Bellino	13
Emily Curran	12
Kevin Stanley	14
Grant Tyler Bellino	15
Adam Dorgan	16
Crystal Willette	18
Chad Gorham	19
Paige Fournier	20
Yerelyn Lopez Corona	21
Kylie Duford	22
Rebecca Westerman	23
Crystal Willette	24
Ginger Hurajt	25
Katherine Stone	24
Chris Wall	25
Marc Mannheimer	34
Danielle Stanuchenski	35
Adam Dorgan	36

WHAT WAS NORMAL	Chad Gorham	37
PHOTO	Adam Dorgan	38
PHOTO	Jose Saul Joubert	39
PHOTO	Danielle Stanuchenski	40
THE EVERYDAY MANNEQUIN	Clare Thompson-Ostrander	41
(UNTITLED) MOON	Marc Mannheimer	43
LAKEY AND LAVENDER	Nicholas Donnellan	44
A WOODS OF ONENESS	Grant Tyler Bellino	46
WHERE ARE YOU, WALT WHITMAN?	Rebecca Westerman	47
A MILLION WORDS	Kim Whiting	48
PHOTO	Noah Greenstein	49
WRISTLINE	Shauna Matthieu	50
WHAT IS THE AMERICAN DREAM?	Yulinda Garcia	52
THE ACCIDENTAL SEANCE	Jay Bellino	54
DRAWING	Jay Bellino	56
THE WORLD ENDS WITH YOU	Edgar Eli Linan	57
PHOTO	Danielle Stanuchenski	59
PHOTO	Adam Dorgan	60
VEGAS	Marc Mannheimer	61
TIGHTROPE OF HOPE	Rebecca Westerman	62
ARTWORK	Jay Bellino	63
BIOS		64
PARNASSUS STAFF/HOW TO CONTRIBUTE		67

GUEST AUTHOR

Dianelly Antigua is a Dominican-American poet and MFA candidate at NYU. At nine years old, she began writing in a journal and discovered her love of creative writing, namely poetry. During her time as an NECC Liberal Arts student, Antigua was a *Parnassus* staff member, contributor to the *Observer*, and later the Student Speaker for the May 2009 commencement ceremonies. She went on to receive her BA in English from the University of Massachusetts Lowell, where she had the pleasure of working with such writers as Andre Dubus III and Maggie Dietz. She is currently working on her manuscript that focuses on love and the complexities involved. It explores the historical, the parental, and the personal, locating the reader to such places as the island, her mother's kitchen, and New York City. Her work appears or is forthcoming in *BOAAT Press*, *Rust + Moth*, *Potluck Mag*, *Big Bell*, and *Tinderbox Poetry Journal*. In May 2016, she will be the keynote speaker for the NECC Poetry Contest and Reading. Aside from writing, Antigua is passionate about higher education and works as an academic advisor in the College of Arts and Sciences at NYU. Her favorite flavor of Ben and Jerry's ice cream is Chubby Hubby. She lives in Brooklyn with three poet roommates.



DIANELLY ANTIGUA

DAYS OF 1996

He was the son of those I'd never met,
but I imagined they had his blonde hair and green
eyes. He'd wear Niagara Falls sweatshirts
marled grey, cuffs brown from rubbing
against the paper during moth class. His fingers
were the same width as the cubes he'd count
in units, tens, and hundreds, then gather
in a bowl as if he never touched them.

He liked my Barbies, even the one
with the chopped hair. He'd take off her clothes
only to change her into something prettier,
a silver dress, some red heels.

We'd play house, I was the mother and he was
the baby. He'd lie down in the nook
of the empty fireplace, belly flopping forward
to his chest, a glimpse of godly flesh paler
than mine, how I wanted him to be the father
as I'd lean in to say goodnight, kiss his lips
and taste the strawberry jam from lunch.

WHITE LOOKING THROUGH PHOTO ALBUMS

THURSDAY IN BUSHWICK

There is this new thing called Super Likes

They give you a free salad after 10

My roommate smelled it first

It lasts for like a second

Let's split it down the middle

Unless you're like into that

I remember when my dad got rid of Candy Land

He started sleeping in my friend's bed in his underwear and he doesn't remember

I think he likes you

5 dollars?

He wants to have sex with me but it's complicated

It's really a very simple game

Like mostly liberal thinking

It just doesn't grow anymore

I send selfies to my mom

And I finally shaved my legs today

She's not my friend, she's my co-worker

What Mario is to Nintendo

Tell her Nick says hi

I couldn't figure out the issue

The first season is open

Your big ass mushrooms floating in the soup

Everything seemed overdone

I worked one day since I've been back

Picked up my dogs, went to the funeral

In pictures, he is always wearing headphones over his afro, the band stretching above the sponged curls, his lips gathered like a dried grape.

Era hermoso, you say.

He was handsome like a lover should be, the kind of handsome that picks you up in a cab on a rainy autumn day, when you find him sitting in the driver's seat, as you slide into the back, body humid and sogged. You shuffle through your purse to avoid his eyes in the rearview

mirror. He takes you home in the green station wagon every day for a year, the smell of taxi and cologne, lingering in your blouse, when you undress alone. You fell

in love with the back of his head first, the crown of hair escaping from the top of the seat, tiny frays like fingers, brown hands to dissolve into.

You tell me about the dancing and the parties, how they would last well into the night, the needle scratching merengue from the record and into the crowded living room, when cerveza glazed his tongue, sour with yeast.

He danced around the room, his legs slipping across the wooden floor, teetering to the rhythm of the music, a balance in his swaying as he bellowed—

Marchate!

Marchate!

He would grab your arm with a strange tenderness and pull you close, weave his fingers into yours like it meant something, your ear against the wiry black hairs of his chest.

I imagine you smiling, your red-lipped I Love Lucy mouth, white teeth, waiting for the Babaloo.

You say he liked to sing love songs in the bedroom.

You were just a drum.

A good beat.

METAL WOMAN

—Jessica Angelini

Women are made from metal.

Sometimes we are bent by the world,
folded like the metal to create a sword;
bent, but strengthened.
Molding ourselves into a more uniform lattice material,
the fire in our hearts -
the fire of passion, the fire of anger, the fire of spite -
allowing us to bend and remodel ourselves.
To bend, to fold, to strengthen.

Sometimes we are beaten, and flattened, and thinned,
the abuse of the world molding us brittle or deformed -
something unrecognizable from where we began.

You see the strong ones and say;
"What a woman,"
But when you see one who is broken,
you utter;
"What a woman,"
voice dripping with disdain
a venom to coat her broken blade
cutting into her palm every time she makes a fist
fighting back
defending herself with every word
fighting the concepts that tie her down

And the ones that are broken are forgotten.
These are the women left on their own,

left only to the few embers that may or may not remain in their hearts,
left to rekindle their flame and re-forgo their metal if they can.

(And if they can't ... it's survival of the fittest, right?

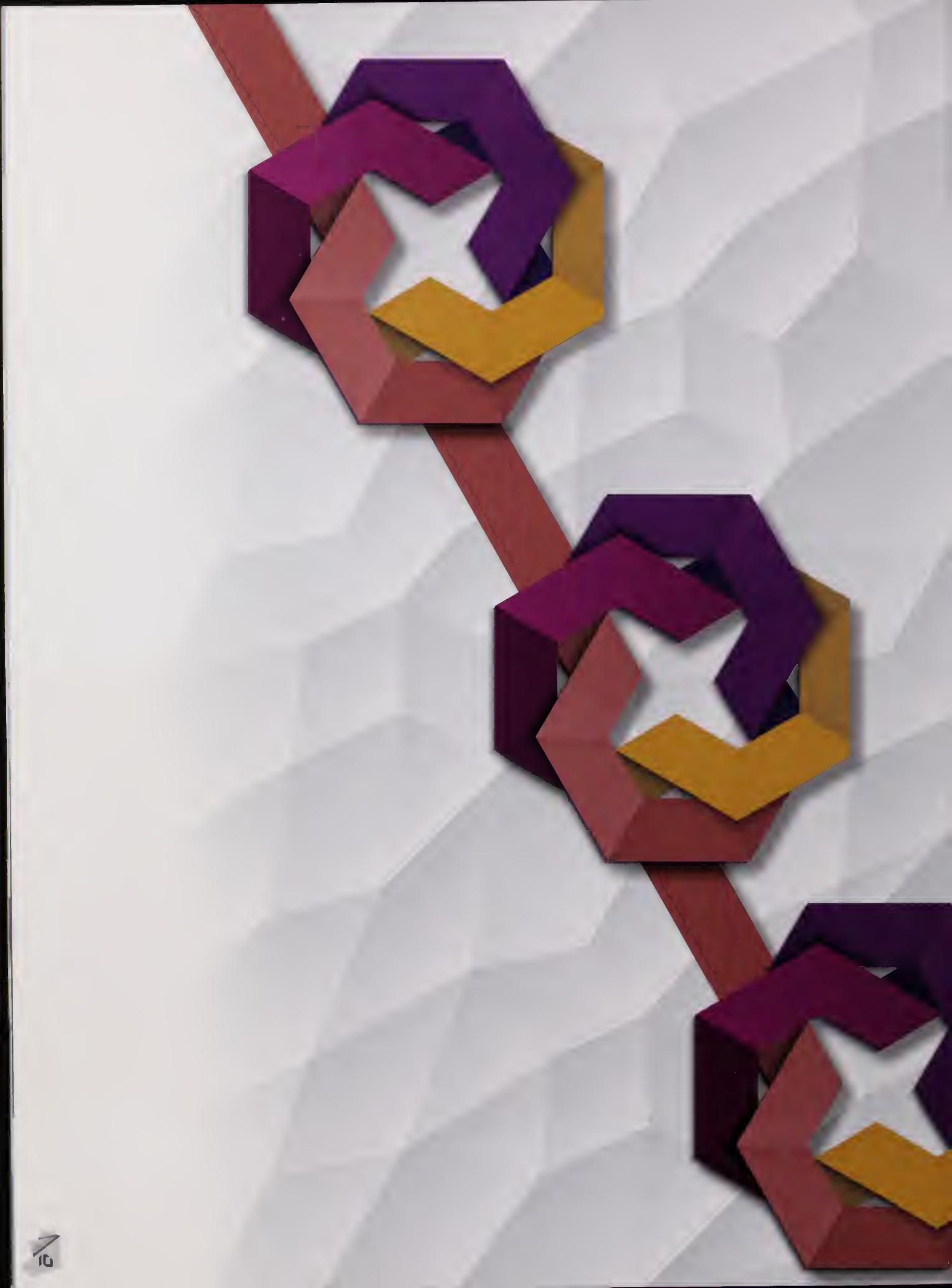
One less in the competition.)

"The Competition"
Forcing a divide,
pitting women against each other
Forcing them to believe there is something wrong
Something wrong with being feminine
or not feminine enough
always something wrong

We're told by the world how to avoid the male gaze,
how to prevent our own rape, how to be strong.
But where does *our prevention* really lead?

It may not be us,
But that means it will be the next girl.
The one who was broken by the world,
the one who did not have the same
resources
support
or strength.

We must band together to form something new;
Less like a weapon and more like chainmail,
each individual forming a link,
strong on its own, but stronger together;
supporting and strengthening our fellow woman –
stronger and sturdier and more connected than ever before.



UNEARNED SPRING

— Sarah Courchesne

About a week ago, I was out for a run and heard the first spring peepers. Trotting along the empty road, I felt something inside my chest break open, and a moment later, the impulse reaching my head, I grinned.

The first warm, wet night had come and gone, and on the roadside there were the rubbery bodies of dead salamanders drying on the gravel. Last year, by the time I heard peepers, we'd all been living our lives for months atop feet of sedimented snow. I was secretly delighted by this since it meant I could ski in the woods almost every day. So this year, some of my inner conflict at hearing the frogs probably also stemmed from longing thoughts of those wooden skis I stripped, pine tarred, and re-waxed in my basement on another forty five degree winter day. They're going back to their summer home in the corner now.

Winter came and went this year and hardly seemed noticeable at all. I began to feel guilty, listening to the peepers. I am a Yankee and a once-Catholic, so I find a comforting rhythm in the cycles of sin and penance, deprivation and purgation. I did shovel the full length of my driveway twice this winter, but only twice, and the snow was light. Now, I was listening to the undeserved gift of these singing frogs.

By the following week, the wood frogs were calling too, and a pair of red-shouldered hawks were sitting close to each other and making circles over an oak tree. The wood frogs hammer, clacketing in the ditches and the pools, and in the water-filled ruts left by heavy machinery in the woods sounded like an army of tiny roofers re-shingling a house somewhere back there. The hawks screeched to each other, a woodpecker let out a high stammer. None of the noises were beautiful. The spring noises in the woods are beautiful not for what they are, but for who makes them, and what they mean. Amphibian love songs, rodent chatter, screechy grackle speak - they are like a child playing Twinkle Twinkle on the violin, or Hot Cross Buns on the recorder. They rake your eardrums with the joy of them.

I realized why I felt such relief at hearing the frogs, even after an almost snowless, warm winter. Winter is silent. Dark too, and the return of the light is a welcome thing as well, but the silence causes something to retreat inside us. All the cold-blooded things are hunkered down, blood barely moving, fractals of ice reaching between their cells. The birds have nothing to sing about, and the voles tunnel too far beneath what snow there is to be seen. We spend three months in the stillness between beats of a salamander's heart.

I ran under a maple tree a few weeks ago and, from a broken branch end, it dripped sap down onto my head. The retracted life now flowing exuberantly out, still months away from full leaf, but with life coursing. My heart had grown its winter husk. Sensitive as a salamander to drying, it waited, in its viscid pocket, for spring.



– Helen Skiepe

UNCONSCIOUSNESS AT NIGHT

—Grant Tyler Bellino

I lay awake,
not quite tiresome, yet not fully conscious.
I have elusive moments in my psyche,
I don't know where I am,
or who I am,
I am lost.

I feel as a virgin sailor would,
caught in a storm,
not knowing how to maneuver.
the waves are crashing violently against my vessel,
my eyes blinded by the heavy rain,
and tears of terror.
Do I lay cowered in my cabin?
or do I try to take control of this uncontrollable situation,
I have bestowed upon myself.
So often I have gone both ways,
and it still has left me with a sour taste of dissatisfaction,
and again I am lost at sea.
Some nights she is calm, slowly rocking my tired soul to sleep,
though always crammed in my cumbersome cabin.
The wind howls and the waters slowly drift my mind aloft,
away from the sea,
away from the paradox of life.
I am living now,
though every breath I take leads to my demise.
I don't feel comfortable, but I never am.

From the virgin sailor,
To the experienced mariner.
I have sailed through the storms of the night,
I face these storms every night,
just before my eyes give into Hypnos' seductive lullaby.

A shroud of sadness serves as my blanket,
it ultimately fails to keep me warm,
the coldness of reality contiguous with my body.
I lay awake,
not quite tiresome, yet not fully conscious.



— Kevin Stanley

NOW THE COWARDLY LION GREW HIS MANE

Grant Tyler Bellino

It was around midnight, and I lay stiff as a board in my rocking chair, rocking back and forth, back and forth. I am not trying to sway myself to sleep; quite the contrary. I am stationed, ready for a possible battle. I am in my pajamas, a white t-shirt, and sweats, but I think of myself as a chivalrous knight. I might think I am a knight, sitting upon my Clydesdale, intimidatingly peering through my iron clad helmet, but I feel scared. I don't fear for my physical safety; I fear for not standing up to the tyrant who has drunkenly claimed the throne in my mother's home. I know this short, weak, and ugly creature only has his crude and hurtful words as true weapons. He would get drunk and start to bully every person in the house. His words were harsh, and he would make threats of violence to my younger brother. If I was to release my wrath, I know I'd beat him; I know I'd tear his motherfucking face off. This was a double entendre: he was fucking my mother, and I hated her for it. I played several scenarios out through my head; he never dared to lay a finger on me. It was like the Cold War, though my nukes were my fists and his were filled with hot air. I didn't test mine out, and he was experienced with flaunting his about. He took advantage of the fact that although I was large in size and capable of punishing his misdeeds, I was only a scared cowardly lion, my mane not fully grown.

I was in the living room, and all of the lights were out. A couple of rooms down the hall was the den of the villainous drunk. There was music blaring throughout the house. This was a tell tale sign of his intoxication, this and the poignant odor of nips. My mother was in his self-proclaimed den, and she was arguing over something. I can't remember exactly what it was, but it probably had to do with the prostitutes he had been seeing, or the money he was embezzling from

my sister's bank account, in order to pay for the prostitutes. A real piece of art this scum bag was. I heard shouting coming from the room, and each time I heard my mother, I was waiting on the edge of my chair to rush into battle. I had a desire to finally cast out this vulgar beast from our lives, but alas, after two hours of waiting, my mother left and entered the living room I was in. She switched on the light and was puzzled to see me awake.

"What are you doing up?" she said.

I could tell she was sad. At this moment I didn't pity her; I still despised her for having this mutt walk all over her, in her own house. She would use the redundant and unjustified argument of her wanting to raise their child together. It was bullshit. This hyena was a toxic, and he poisoned the entire household with his nastiness.

"I'm just waiting," I coldly told her.

"Waiting for what?" I heard her respond. At this moment all of the tortured images flooded my mind. I stopped rocking in my chair and I looked up to her, dead in the eye. I said, "I'm waiting for him to put his hands on you again."

I was at a friend's house across town. We were all walking around the neighborhood, playing games and enjoying each other's company. Just a group of high school friends enjoying the beginnings of summer. Night



– Adam Bergan

had fallen when I received a troubling phone call from my younger brother.

In a scared tone my brother told me, "Richard, you have to come home; he's been drinking and we're afraid something is going to happen. Come home."

I immediately left my friend's house, though not alone; a couple of my friends accompanied me. It was dark, and the lights were dim as we travelled several miles across town, back to my house. All the while I was thinking the worst; I gave into my thoughts and I was panicking. What was I to do? I was supposed to rush back into the castle and reclaim my house for the dignity of my family. Was I going to do it? Was I to use my fists? Did I have the courage to stand up to him? I carnered Pond Street and saw my house, lights on. I told my friends to wait outside.

I entered my kitchen and noticed the place was rather quiet. There was that smell of alcohol, although the music was absent. I came across my younger sister and I asked her what was the matter. Though I innately knew, she like the rest of us was afraid. Afraid of the tyrant.

"Richard, you can't go back; you have to stay. We don't know what is going to happen. We need you," she pleaded to me. I didn't see a commotion at the moment, so cowardly reassured her nothing was to happen. I felt weak. I was to go back to my friend's house when my sister and brother were both terrified of his unpredictability.

When my friends and I returned back to meet with the others, I received another phone call from my brother, and this time he was out of control. I couldn't understand exactly what he was saying except "He had his hands around her throat and he was choking her." I started to run back, but the host's mother insisted she would drive me back to my house. In the car I called the police.

When I arrived back home, there were police cruisers all over the street, searching for the prick who had since tried to escape. He was shortly found, and though my house was safer for the moment, I felt emasculated, I not being the one to conquer and dispel the drunk from our house.

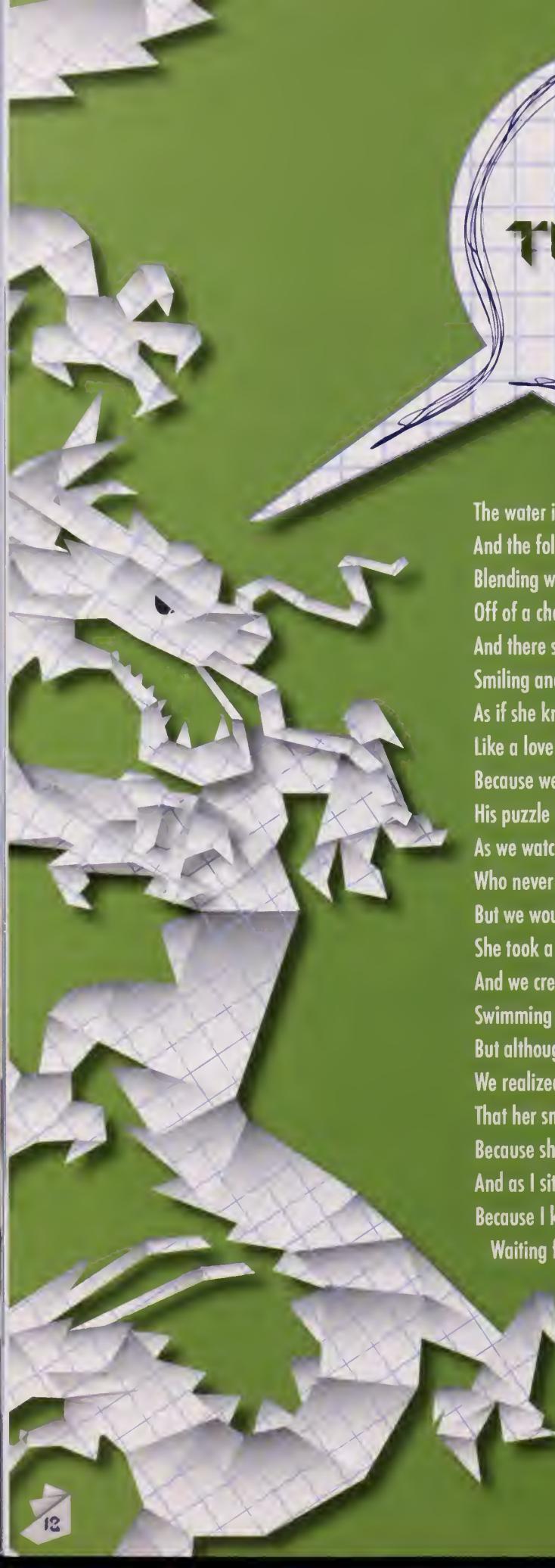
I had a dream that night, of me fighting the brute. My punches weren't effectively landing. It seemed every time I punched and made contact with his face, my wrists would become like rubber and bend. In my mind I wanted to fight; I wanted to pulverize this terrorist. I, this big and powerful lion couldn't even destroy.

Like a fool, my mother let the scumbag back into our house. I couldn't understand her reasoning. He didn't drink immediately; he promised he was going to stay sober. My mother had fallen for his crocodile tears once again. After a few months he gradually started to drink again. This is why I laid stiff in my rocking chair; I was not to abandon my past. Every night I stayed here until all members of the house were asleep. I was the watchdog; the least I could do was to prevent him from touching anyone in my presence. I don't know whether it was fear or self-control that stopped me from physically tossing him out of the house right then and there.

Another hour had passed since my mother had left me in the living room. I started to doze off, when all of a sudden I heard my mother. She was calling my name. No. She wasn't calling, she was screaming out. She was distressed.

"Richard, help! Richard!" my mother cried out. I immediately got off of my Clydesdale; I was ready to prove my bravery. I was ready to protect my family.

I sprinted into the den, and I saw that he was gripping my mother's wrists with one hand and smacking her with the other. When I saw this, I saw red. The cowardly lion who had entered the room would leave it triumphantly. I charged at him like a bull and he released his grip on my mother. I moved my mother away from his reach. I placed my hand around his neck, and I squeezed. With the other hand I started to pummel his head in. I didn't stop until he stopped slithering around. When he stopped moving, my mother rose and went to make sure he wasn't dead. She had me take my hand off of his throat. When it did I could see his neck had my entire hand seamed into his neck. He was breathing. My mother was relieved; I wasn't. I wanted to be rid of him forever. After finding out the prick was alive, I dragged him across the hallway and through the kitchen, my siblings watching from the stairs. I opened the front door, and I threw him out. We were rid of the drunk, and I had earned the man I have today. I had proven my masculinity by finally standing up to the tyrant, and then dethroning him. This is when I had finally grew my mane, and a beautiful mane it was. It was a representation of courage, my mane, and I had earned it.



THERE SHE SITS

—Crystal Willette

The water in the bay sparkled like the diamonds on her wedding ring
And the foliage was made of deep, vibrant greens
Blending well with each other, as if by fate they were a matched couple
Off of a cheesy dating site
And there she sat, calmly, collectively, as if she were meant to be there
Smiling and waving sweetly as we rode off into the distance
As if she knew we'd be back soon, to pick it up where we left off
Like a love letter that wasn't quite finished
Because we too knew we'd see her once more, as God had intended from the start
His puzzle laid out accordingly, with such certainty, such grace
As we watched, attached to strings like puppets at the show
Who never got a damn lunch break
But we wouldn't wave again, for that was the last time we'd ever see her
She took a one way trip to the land above, and decided to stay forever
And we created a river that flowed endlessly
Swimming laps for many months to come
But although we swam those laps like that of the fish in the sea
We realized the river need not flow in this vast open world
That her smiling face was all we needed to plug it up and run it dry
Because she wouldn't want another river
And as I sit here and reminisce during the days to come, I smile
Because I know she's watching from that land up above
Waiting for our presence once again, but hoping we take our time
Since she's in no rush, she waits with such patience
Because that's the kind of person she was, and always will be
And for that I love her eternally

MURKY AND BROWN

—Chad Gorham

You are sharp,	Bank Robberies
Pain is stroked.	And old ladies mugged.
Pinhole in the skin,	A baby murdered
Warmth running through	An overdose to come.
Your veins.	How does a little prick,
A soul begins to deplete.	Make it so
The dark liquid inside,	Murky and Brown.
Murky and brown.	
	It originated out of fun
Once only known	Hanging with a friend.
To administer help.	Heroin filled needle
Now found in the gutter	Carries life's finale.
Just thrown in the trash.	Look at life now,
The high that it gives	How would it be?
Creates an addiction.	Minus the drug,
Suddenly life becomes,	It would never be.
Murky and brown.	Murky and brown.



SINNERS

— Yerelyn Lopez Corona

She is perfection ... Draped in moonlight, her glabrous, alabaster skin glimmered and horripilated as the late autumn wind blew through the windows. Her raven curls dispersed around her curvaceous body like coiling vines on the branches of trees and throughout the silken dark blue sea of cushions and bed linen. Sculptured by the gods, she retained her welcoming posture as if inviting painters to inspire from her pulchritude.

She is perfection ... Grossly incandescent even under moonlight, arms above her palpitating chest, she appeared to fall from a divine state of slumber; a fair maiden loved by many, hated by none. An idol to the young, with the generosity of a saint, her warmth reached even the vagabonds and the impaired.

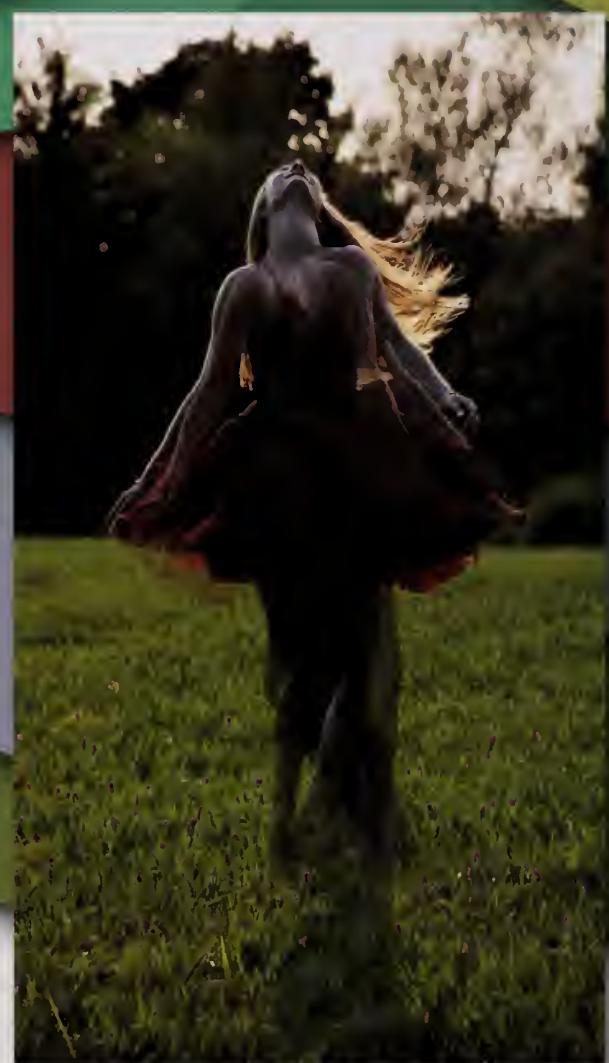
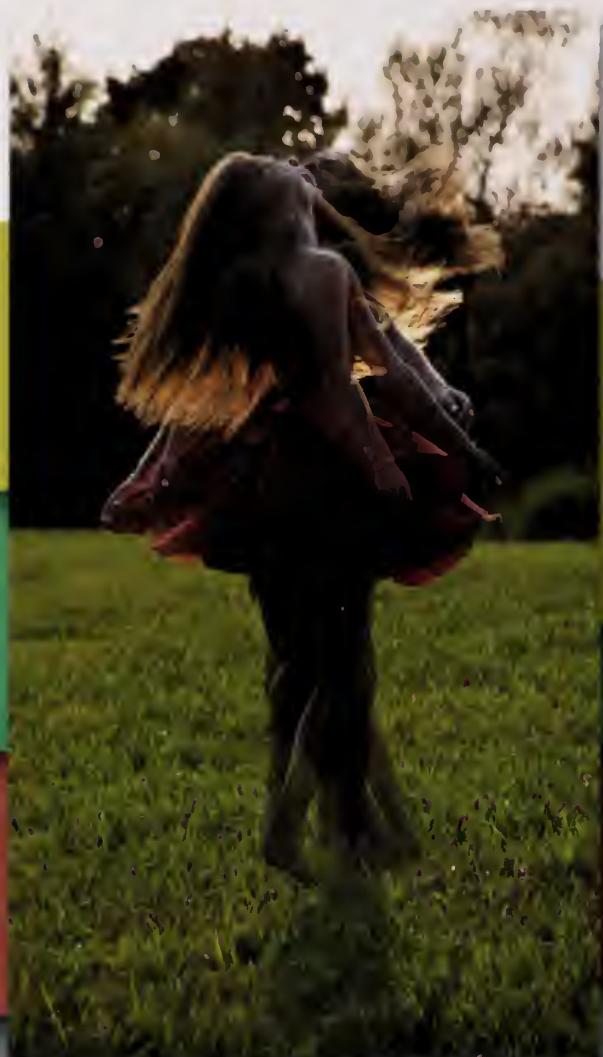
Unblemished she was, like the quintessential autumn day, with elegance and grace. He became engorged as his eyes devoured her scouring physique, craving to bite the mouth-watering purity forbidden to the sinner.

She is perfection ... As he restrained himself from an attempt to defile her, she awakened from her deep slumber and watched him. Her russet eyes peered into his soul with tender inquisitiveness, like a saint redeeming the damned; she irradiated his soul with a genuine smile. Alarmed by her tranquil state, he hesitated to approach her, petrified by her innocence. Those eyes of hers stirred emotions he was ignorant to, caused his heart to flutter, his breath to falter, his knees to tremble, yet he felt invited. He approached her

sanctuary, obstructing the moonlight as he contemplated her. She reached for his hand and fondled it preciously, enforcing his arousal.

She is perfection ... Cherished by many and abhorred by none, he placed his hand over her eyes and gazed at her blossomed lips like a famished beast; he came with many promises. He reached for his belt and dove to savor her craved lips. There was a transient invulnerability as he retrieved the gift from his belt and removed his hand from her eyes. Her face became flushed as she smiled graciously, emitting such honesty and joy; he had pledged to the covenant. As the late autumn wind blew through the windows, embracing her denuded body, he plunged his hand onto her chest. The knife has pierced her heart, but she did not fray; she accepted her fate. And with her fading breath, she bestowed upon him an apologetic smile to atone for her wrong doings, and he became compunctionous of his acts, but he had pledged to his covenant to sacrifice his desires.

She was perfection ... Days after he had sinned, the courier knocked on his door and delivered a stack of letters he had been guarding after his accident on the road. He received the letters with a smile and retrieved to his comfort to read them. There, in the flickering fire of the candles, he discovered that she had been sending letters to him after their first encounter in the market. In the letters, she declared her undying love.



— Kylie Duford

MUMBLE

—Rebecca Westerman

I've memorized every gentle etch in your face and often times
I want to cup it in my hands, just for a minute.

I long to brush my fingertips across your lips,
brush my lips up against your cheekbones when we're about to depart
But my heart always jumps in my throat at the last second.

And my hands tremble too much to whisper across your lips.

I just smile nervously and stare at the ground, pathetically mumbling
"Drive safe.."

When you talk, I concentrate on how the skin around your eyes tightens in excitement
and you move you're your hands around a lot.

I watch their flourishes, my eyes wander.

I like the way you talk.

I like the way your voice has this slow, melancholy to it.

My ears prick forward like a hunting dog who has heard
something rustling in the brush. I don't want to miss a word you say.

Sometimes you,
Mumble.

I want to tell you how I absentmindedly think about the things we talk about after you've gone.

When I'm driving on the highway,
when I'm putting on socks,
washing the dishes,
doing laundry, doing-

And I'm sorry I kept twisting my hands around nervously
when I told you how my parents split.

I've thrown too many pennies in wells, wished upon too many stars, and bought too many scratch tickets.

I've debated entirely in my own skull the existential crisis of being alone, alone!

What could be the point of anything when you're constantly alone.

No one, not even the river can hear the flood of thoughts pressing, bending, coercing to escape.

It's like a static buzz when you hit the wrong input on a TV remote, and this blaring awful noise fills up your ears.

You just want to turn it off, anything to get away from being-
You don't make me feel alone.

I wish I was romantic.

I wish I was yours.



TIME

—Crystal Willette

It was a sunny Tuesday afternoon in the heart of Los Angeles, California
When I looked down at my sister, who was no more than seven, with an everlasting glee
And for a small moment in time, I forgot all about the movie that was constantly rolling
Forgot the way this puzzle had worked, forgot which pieces fit together

So I took her hand in mine, and we ran

Ran faster than the speed of light, faster than any car or train I'd seen in my years
We ran through the city, its textures and colors blending like a painting fresh off its easel

We ran past the park we'd once played at; the framework rusted and cracked

It reminded me of a movie I'd seen once, about Earth after all life had died
And all that remained were the remnants of a tortured soul once good and pure

As we ran through the city, through memories faded from unattended use

I forgot for a moment where we were headed and why we were doing so
But as the sirens blazed in the background and the screams muffled my ears

I remembered.

And we ran; ran to the shelters that'd hold us safe until daylight broke

Broke through the clouds of ash and poison that grabbed hold of our lungs

And refused to let go

And once we rose through those steel bolted doors and emerged to civilization

We'd realize there's no civilization left; that we were the last humans on Earth

And we'd cry tears of sorrow and joy, thanking God we were alive

But damning Him because we wish we weren't

But that was just a dream, a memory stored in Father Time's closet

Collecting dust and bugs as millions of years passed him by, and he was still alive

He'd look at it as a child would a forgotten toy, and smile

Because it wasn't something he wanted to play with, like the child would

Which is why it collected dust in the first place



TINDER

—Ginger Hurajt

The black and white
obituaries from the Sunday news
can be torn up and used
to kindle the woodstove

Across the pages ashen faces
are spaced like random gravestones
Photographed smiles beam
unsuitably for the occasion

Crammed together like teeth
who will read this tiny print?
Crumple these paper relics for the grieving
Mound them up and strike a match

Their stories combust
with a flash then vanish
Flames exhale warmth
for the bones of the quick



— Katherine Stone

A BARO'S QUEST

—Chris Wall

Once there was a great kingdom, known as After All. It was ruled by a benevolent King and Queen. They ruled in a time of peace between many different races, from the impish Elves, to the enormous Giants. Man lived peacefully with all... all but the orcs, that is.

The orcs were a vicious, bloodthirsty people, ugly as they were cruel. Their skin was green like the slime of a Gelatinous Boil Ants of Garge. Their faces were square and flat, with noses that looked as if their mothers had mated with wild boars (which wasn't uncommon). Their large tusk like teeth stuck straight up in the air from their lower jaw, which protruded in very noticeable under bites. Their eyes were black and beady, like sewer rats. Yes, they were an ugly people, a grotesque people. They got off on attacking villages, killing and plundering.

The King and Queen of After All tried to write out countless treaties with the orcs, but to no avail. Finally, the line was crossed, as the orcs cornered the soul heir to the throne, a princess by name of Tricia. They stole the young princess away, along with her mare. When learning of the grave news, the King offered a reward to any and all who could bring his daughter back. This reward? The savior would be married to the young princess and made King of After All. Only one was brave enough, talented enough, and fierce enough to accept the task.

This man was a knight of the highest order, heir to the most noble of families within the kingdom. He set forth to save the princess. But, alas, he died a most tragic death as he spurred his great stallion toward the portcullis, which was far too low to pass under. The bloody fool wasn't watching where he was going and got his neck caught on a spike as the portcullis continued to rise. I believe they are still attempting to clean the blood from the cobblestones... poor chap, but that's where I come in!

Allow me to introduce myself: Chris of Bradford. I am merely a lowly bard, who tells his stories to tune of lute within the local pub. My small village is just south of the great city of All. I've never been to the city, but I've talked to many a man who has. I dreamt of telling my stories there some day. But no one would be much in the mood with the Princess still missing.

It had been a month since the fair princess had been taken, and no one had even attempted to rescue her! There has been no call for ransom, and many thought the wench dead! I, however, was confident! I was bold, and brave, and strong, and lying about all of this. Truth be told, I was bloody bored! I wanted not to sit around this smelly old tavern anymore, I was making a nice sum of money through tips, but my stories were growing stale. I wished to go out and make my own story, I'd die trying if that's what it took! (Though I prayed to the gods that it wouldn't have to come to that). Oh the poor maidens were sad to see me go...

"Good riddance!" they would shout.

"About bloody time the perv's leavin'!" they'd wail.

"And stay out, you no good ingrate!"

I waved and called, "Ta ta, mother! Thank you very much!" I ducked to avoid a rotten tomato which was aimed for the flat cap atop my head. I walked upon my two feet with nary a pack on my back nor food for my belly. I had only my lute and a dull, chipped short sword that I had managed to take from the blacksmith whilst he was distracted by a flock of chickens that was conveniently released inside his forge!

My adventure wos ofoot! I wos about to go out into the cold cruel world to sove o princess! Nothing could ever hope to dampen my spirit!

"I told you to empty your bloody pockets and hand over yer gold!" The highwaymon snapped, his blade hovering just too close to my jugular.

"As I've just finished telling you sir," I began shrilly, "I haven't o coin on my person! Ain't even got pockets, you see!"

Twos true, of course! Whot good were pockets to o mon without need of them? I couldn't very well carry my lute or blade—both tossed to the side during the mugging—within pockets meont for coin. And whot good were coins going to do me in the heort of orc country onywoy? Why bother bringing them along?

Apporently the highwaymon wos not omused. "Quit your wit, fool! Give me your coin!"

This wos the point in which the highwaymon mode a vital mistoke. If there wos one thing I detest more than anything it's being colled o fool. A fool is some ignoromus without the finesse nor imoginotion to create ortful stories and lyrical poetry!

"I'll hove you know, sir," said I, my face growing red, "that I am a BARD. Not o fool!"



"Fools, bards," the highwaymon sneered, "you all bleed the same!"

"Aye, and so do thieves," came o feminine voice, along with the slithering sounds of o blade piercing skin and organ. The highwaymon's face went from a devious sneer, to a pale look of horror. He dropped to the ground in a puff of dirt and lay perfectly still.

I looked up to see o lovely young woman with short crimson hair and o round face. Her eyes were of o piercing blue, and

her smile was dazzlingly white. Her face was covered in dirt, her clothes but rags, and she stood about a head shorter than our hero.

I looked down upon the highwayman, eyeing that glittering sword that had been pointing at my neck not a moment before. "Do you think the bloke would mind my taking his weapon?" I asked my fire headed heroine.

She gave him a thoughtful look before saying, "I don't think he'd mind. In fact, I believe his last words before crossing the waters of the River Styx were, 'Please, Bard, take this sword as an apology for wronging you!'"

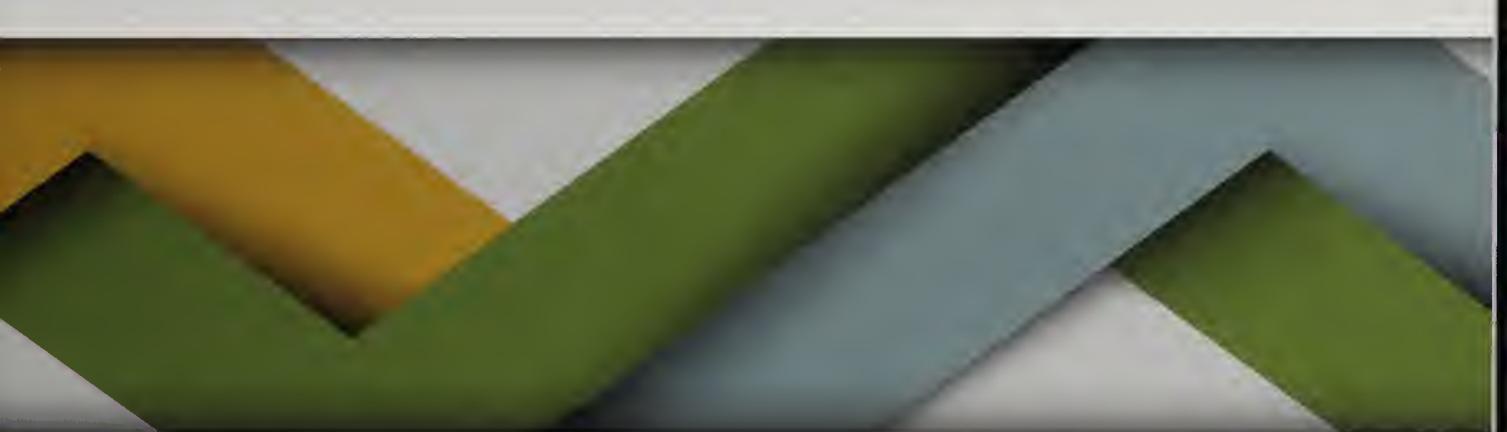
I smiled and said, "Oh poor thief, I accept thy apology!" I picked up the glimmering, well taken care of blade and held it before me. I looked to the young woman, who was watching me apprehensively. I removed my cap and bowed to her. "My deepest and humblest thanks to ye, faire maiden! You have saved mine life, and my lute!"

The girl's eye glittered a moment. "Loot, eh?" No doubt visions of gold and gems were passing before her eyes.

I gave her a wry smile and said, "Would you like to see it, my dear?"

Her right eyebrow raised curiously, her lips curled into a smile as she said, "Sure."

I walked to where my instrument lay discarded and picked it up. I began to strum the chords as I hummed. I grinned at the

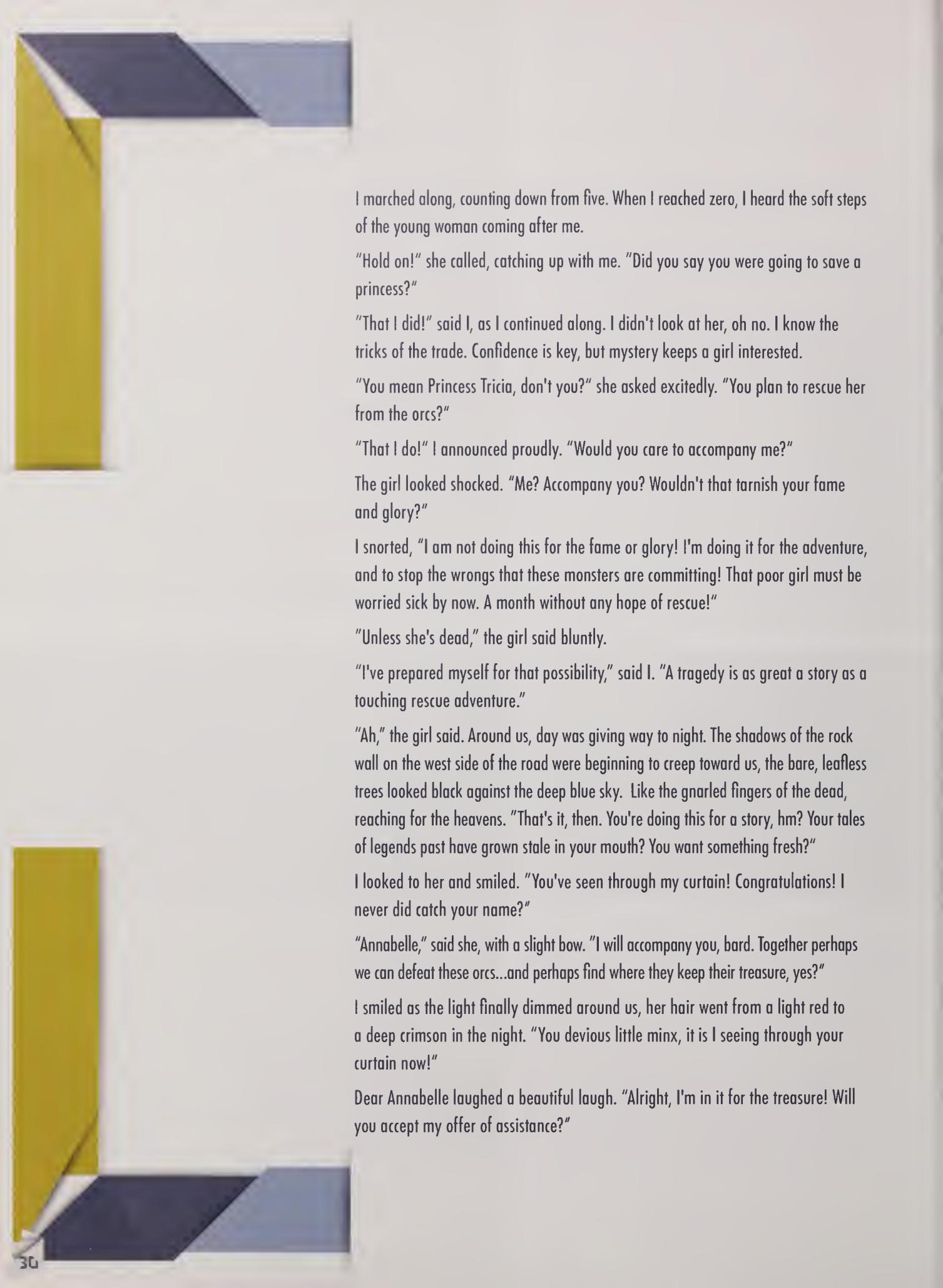


surprised look on her face, and the disappointment in her eyes.

"Ah yes," said I, "that's L-U-T-E, my scarlet beauty!"

The girl glared at me. "You knew exactly what I was thinking of didn't you?"

I shrugged as I sheathed my sword and threw the strap of the lute over my shoulder. "I haven't the faintest idea what you're talking about. Now if you'll excuse me, I have a princess to save!"



I marched along, counting down from five. When I reached zero, I heard the soft steps of the young woman coming after me.

"Hold on!" she called, catching up with me. "Did you say you were going to save a princess?"

"That I did!" said I, as I continued along. I didn't look at her, oh no. I know the tricks of the trade. Confidence is key, but mystery keeps a girl interested.

"You mean Princess Tricia, don't you?" she asked excitedly. "You plan to rescue her from the orcs?"

"That I do!" I announced proudly. "Would you care to accompany me?"

The girl looked shocked. "Me? Accompany you? Wouldn't that tarnish your fame and glory?"

I snorted, "I am not doing this for the fame or glory! I'm doing it for the adventure, and to stop the wrongs that these monsters are committing! That poor girl must be worried sick by now. A month without any hope of rescue!"

"Unless she's dead," the girl said bluntly.

"I've prepared myself for that possibility," said I. "A tragedy is as great a story as a touching rescue adventure."

"Ah," the girl said. Around us, day was giving way to night. The shadows of the rock wall on the west side of the road were beginning to creep toward us, the bare, leafless trees looked black against the deep blue sky. Like the gnarled fingers of the dead, reaching for the heavens. "That's it, then. You're doing this for a story, hm? Your tales of legends past have grown stale in your mouth? You want something fresh?"

I looked to her and smiled. "You've seen through my curtain! Congratulations! I never did catch your name?"

"Annabelle," said she, with a slight bow. "I will accompany you, bard. Together perhaps we can defeat these orcs...and perhaps find where they keep their treasure, yes?"

I smiled as the light finally dimmed around us, her hair went from a light red to a deep crimson in the night. "You devious little minx, it is I seeing through your curtain now!"

Dear Annabelle laughed a beautiful laugh. "Alright, I'm in it for the treasure! Will you accept my offer of assistance?"

I smiled. "Aye, I don't see why not. Two heads—and blades—are better than one, eh?"

She smiled, and together we, the Heroic Duo... the Mighty Deuce... I'm still working out the name... We marched along through the night! By daylight, we would reach the heart of orc country.

Annabelle was one hell of a woman. He was beautiful, witty, and she could seriously kick an arse or two! As we traveled through orc country, we were attacked by three different groups. By the time I managed to take one of the ugly bastards down, Annabelle had taken down the rest! Her banter was wonderful too. At any given moment during a fight, you could hear her shouting such phrases as, "You call that a swing? Who taught you to swing an ax, a fisherman?!" or, "It's a club, not a blade, stop trying to stab me you lumox!"

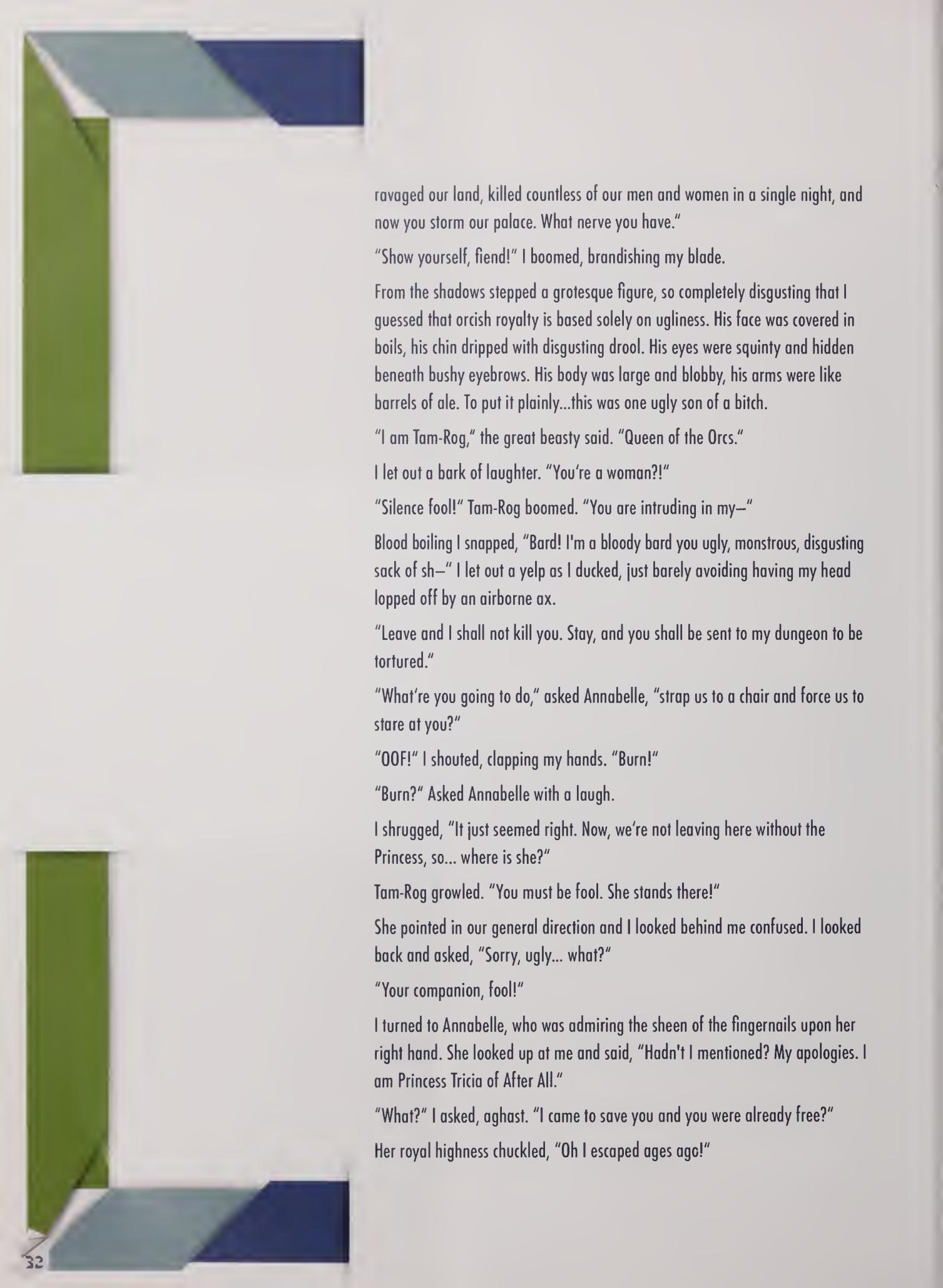
Her precision with a blade was immaculate. With every thrust and slash she drew blood. She had a mad look about her, as if she truly hated these foul beasts.

Whatever wrongs they had committed against her, I would never know. Couldn't ask them even if I wanted to. After the first few fights I stepped back whilst she fought the beasts. I traded my blade for my lute, and played a new tune with each battle. From "Every Maiden's Mad For a Sharply Clothed Lord" to "Robust Lasses, Thou Art Beautiful", her swordplay was like a choreographed dance to my music. The ballet was ripping its way through the orcish country, and when the sun began to peak from behind its horizon, it looked down upon carnage the likes of which none shall ever see again. The woman was stark raving mad I tell you. I was damn glad to be on her side.

We reached a high tower, dead center within the orc country. The Palace of the Orc King. We strode right up to those palace gates, and as Annabelle sent the two guards to Oblivion, I shoved the doors open. The Palace was dimly lit by torches unevenly placed upon the walls. The very same walls were stained with blood, food and... ick. Above was a large chandelier that looked to be made of human bones. It was suspended by a pair of ropes each tied to the wall on either side of the door.

"My God," I whispered, yet it still echoed throughout the throne room. "These beasts seriously need to consider redecorating."

"You call us beasts," a deep voice echoed through the room. "And yet you have



ravaged our land, killed countless of our men and women in a single night, and now you storm our palace. What nerve you have."

"Show yourself, fiend!" I boomed, brandishing my blade.

From the shadows stepped a grotesque figure, so completely disgusting that I guessed that orcish royalty is based solely on ugliness. His face was covered in boils, his chin dripped with disgusting drool. His eyes were squinty and hidden beneath bushy eyebrows. His body was large and blobby, his arms were like barrels of ale. To put it plainly...this was one ugly son of a bitch.

"I am Tam-Rog," the great beastly said. "Queen of the Orcs."

I let out a bark of laughter. "You're a woman?!"

"Silence fool!" Tam-Rog boomed. "You are intruding in my—"

Blood boiling I snapped, "Bard! I'm a bloody bard you ugly, monstrous, disgusting sack of sh—" I let out a yelp as I ducked, just barely avoiding having my head lopped off by an airborne ax.

"Leave and I shall not kill you. Stay, and you shall be sent to my dungeon to be tortured."

"What're you going to do," asked Annabelle, "strap us to a chair and force us to stare at you?"

"OOF!" I shouted, clapping my hands. "Burn!"

"Burn?" Asked Annabelle with a laugh.

I shrugged, "It just seemed right. Now, we're not leaving here without the Princess, so... where is she?"

Tam-Rog growled. "You must be fool. She stands there!"

She pointed in our general direction and I looked behind me confused. I looked back and asked, "Sorry, ugly... what?"

"Your companion, fool!"

I turned to Annabelle, who was admiring the sheen of the fingernails upon her right hand. She looked up at me and said, "Hadn't I mentioned? My apologies. I am Princess Tricia of After All."

"What?" I asked, aghast. "I came to save you and you were already free?"

Her royal highness chuckled, "Oh I escaped ages ago!"

I threw my hands into the air and shouted, "Then what the bloody freaking hell are we doing here?!"

"I had to come back for my horse didn't I?" she asked gesturing to a bay Morgan standing in the corner, tied to a torch.

"So we came all the way here so you could get some bloody horse?!"

"She's not just some bloody horse," Tricia said simply. "She's MY bloody horse."

I threw my hands up again and said "Well excuuuuuuusssse me, princess. I'm so sorry to have botched your rescue attempt."

"I don't see why you're so upset," the Princess said with a smile. "This will make for a grand story, will it not?"

The anger in my face left in a flash. A grin spread upon my pale face as I said, "Aye, I suppose it will. That seems close enough, don't you think?"

"I suppose so," said Tricia. "Shall we?"

"Ladies first!" I said. A split second after Tricia began to spin, I too swung around with my blade, slicing through the rope that held the chandelier of bones in place. You see, whilst we had been arguing, the Orc Queen had started to inch forward, thinking us distracted. The two of us were fully aware of her movements and had been waiting for the perfect moment to drop the bones. The Queen looked up in shock as the bone chandelier came down atop her head with a tremendous crash!

Princess Tricia and I looked upon the pile of bones in satisfaction. She looked to me, and I to her.

"So," she said. "How about we go for tea?"

"Loathe the stuff, I'm afraid," said I as we stepped out into the morning sun, horse in tow.

"Thank the gods," she said, relieved. "I really can't stand tea parties."

"Pint of Chocolate milk, then?" I asked, extending my arm.

She looked to me and smiled as she laced her arm through mine. "Sounds lovely." As we walked off, toward the Kingdom of After All, she added, "Father won't like me marrying a fool."

"Then it's a good thing I'm a bard," said I, already piecing together what would become the most riveting story to come to a local tavern near you.

LEAVING [THE WOODS]

—Marc Mannheimer

As we left Selaytin and climbed up
the sky was a dramatic, palpable gray,
the Light filling it,
expanding into the mist
yet still clear, in focus.

Scars appeared in the encroaching forest,
now at the road.
It emerged like a wall a sudden boundary
the woods so dense stories could never leave.

Dusk urgent and spreading.
Light
quickly
through
rows,
rows
of straight gray stock,
pocked with carbuncles of dark sap.

Wide cuts proliferate suddenly.
Then geometric spaces appear and grow
In the distance.
The forested hills covered in moving patches
while twilight mist mounts the tree tops
In a slowly smothering blanket.

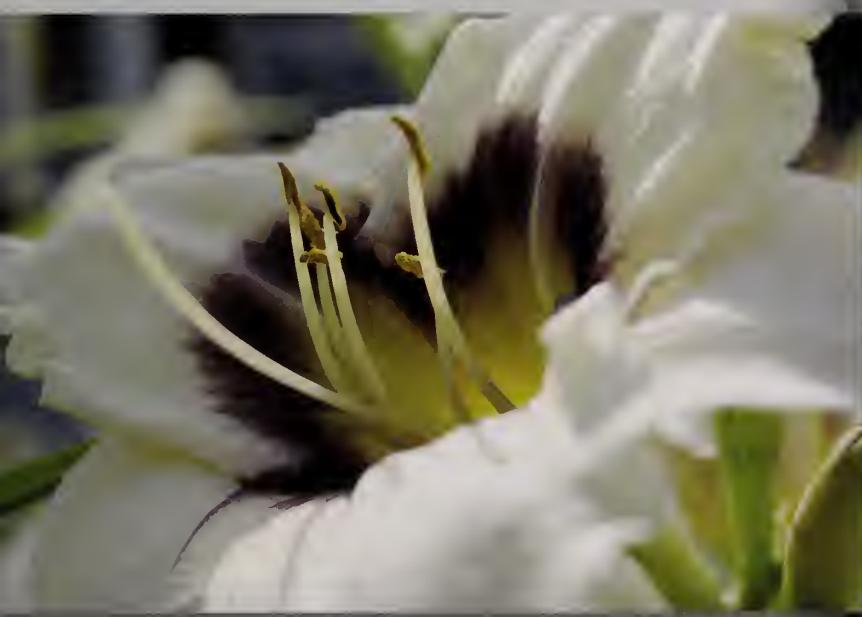
More forest road surface,
stones tarmac stones.
Puddles quiet, not quiet
Not.

Apprehensive banter
Ukraine road, Romanian guide
with punctured rear tire.
Ride the rim to a town eventually.
The rain gets harder the road worse the sky darker.

I speak to my Mother in silent whispers,
I saw the mud roads, the green hills,
felt the freedom of isolation.
Took the stones.
Lingered at their neglected graves.

A Red truck appears stops
can't loosen the wheel but directs us
towards an unseen village.
Twenty minutes later four desolate young strangers
come to our aid language not a barrier.
Free Beer for all.

We venture on, the rain ends.
I smile to little Anna Roth,
knowing it was her.



– Danielle Stanuchenski



— Adam Morgan

WHAT WAS NORMAL

—Chad Gorham

First Drink

I had my first drink while out hanging with friends. I had tasted alcohol a lot by this time in my life but it was the first time with friends.

"Guess what I stole from my mother?" my best friend Theresa asked.

"What?" I said.

Theresa pulled out a clear bottle that contained a clear liquid. I knew exactly what it was. It was vodka. With alcohol a constant in our lives we were very familiar with what it was and what it did. We just did not know exactly what it felt like to be drunk.

All of our friends were standing around egging us on to drink it. We cracked the top and both took what we thought were shots of the vodka, but we really just sipped it.

Yellow Brick Road

"Let's hang down the Yellow Brick Road tonight. We can climb in the back of one of the big rigs and nobody will see us drinking," I said.

The Yellow Brick Road was named after the way it looked while one of my friends was tripping on acid. The lights gave it a yellow color, but she actually saw the Yellow Brick Road from *The Wizard of Oz*. From that day on it became known as the Yellow Brick Road. We thought it was a great place for us to drink without being caught by the police.

"Chad, I have to go the bathroom; will you hold my drink?" Theresa said.

"Sure, what's in it?"

"Vodka of course," she said.

Theresa climbed into a bush and started to go to the bathroom. Just then a car zoomed up the Yellow Brick Road at us. It was the cops. I suddenly was standing in the middle of the Yellow Brick Road with Theresa's two-liter bottle of root beer and vodka in my hand. Next thing I knew there were cameras in my face. The show *Cops* happened to be filming in Southie that night.

Waterfront

The waterfront is somewhere we liked to hang out and drink on the weekends. Many people from the different areas of Southie would gather there. It was a tiny oasis for us on the outskirts of Southie and what now is called the Seaport. In the middle of a giant asphalt parking lot with random buildings sprawled across it sits the waterfront. It is a small park that is longer than it is wider.

"We need to hurry up and finish our drinks before the cops come," I was constantly spouting out.

I was not one to waste money, and I knew if the cops came, they would dump everything out and send us on our way. To make sure I never got caught with alcohol, I always drank mine first. This also meant I was always the first one drunk and the first one to go home.

"Time for me to go home," I said.

And I stumbled away from the waterfront toward my home two miles away.

K and Third

It was the corner I lived on; it was the corner I hung out on. This was where the drinking found its normalcy in our lives. My house was situated on one corner. It was a three-story building with a bar on the first floor. Diagonally across the street was another bar.

"Hey fuck you," a drunk guy said as he stumbled out of the bar.

There were about thirty of us hanging out on the corner that day, and we all burst out laughing. This was normal for us though as it was in our everyday life as bars were scattered across the neighborhood and most of our parents liked to drink a bit too much.

"Who is going to get alcohol?" Theresa said.

"Um, D.O.B. of course," was the answer I gave.

We called our friend that because of her initials. Her name was Danielle O'Brien and she was the youngest of all our friends. She had a much older look, even at the age of fourteen. She would wear too much makeup and had big hair. Most kids our age did not style themselves like that, but it worked for her and us in the long run. People from all over would come to K and Third to deliver their money to us so we could bring D.O.B. to the liquor store.

Reeb

"Let's go down the mills tonight," I told everyone.

I was excited to get away from my house for the night. It was finally Friday, and it was time to hang out with my friends.

It was going to be a night of drinking, of course. The mills were just two blocks from my house. It was just far enough to be away from the front of my house where my mother would see me.

"Chad, I have a nickname for you," said my friend Brendan.

"Oh yeah, what is it?" I said with great trepidation. I was not sure what to expect for a name, but I was expecting it to deal had to do with me being gay.

"It's Reeb," Brendan said.

"Reeb?"

"Yes, it's beer spelled backward, and you're a guy and don't drink beer so I thought it was a good name for you."

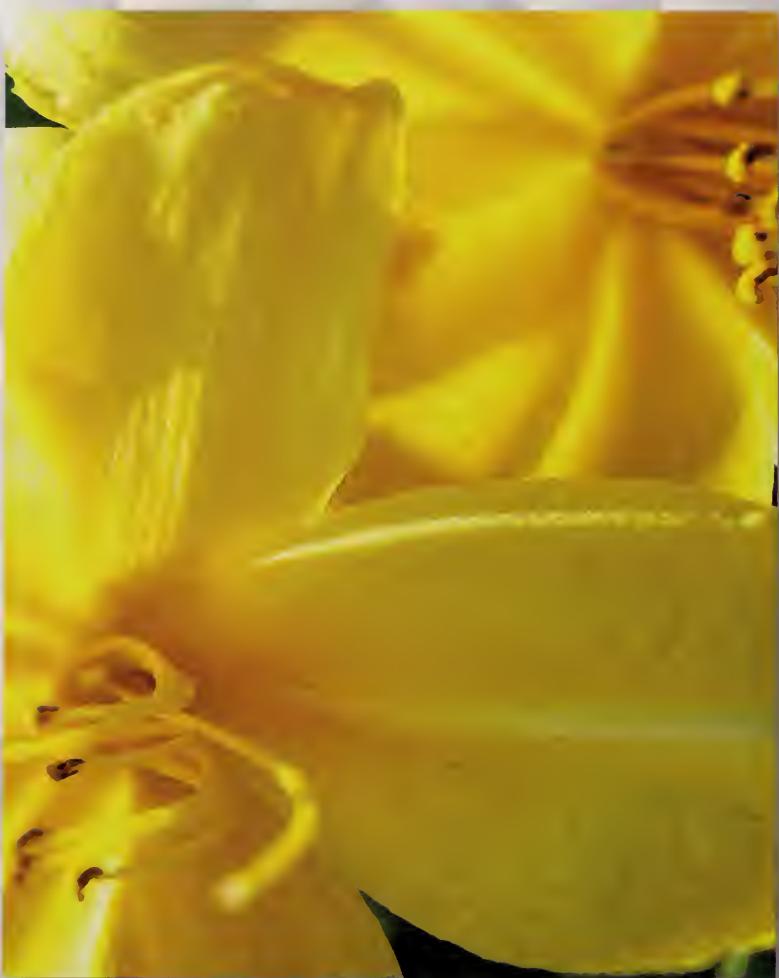
I pulled out my pint of vodka and said, "Reeb it is."



— Adam Bergen



— Jose Saul Joubert



— Danielle Stanuchenski

THE EVERYDAY MANNEQUIN

—Clare Thompson-Ostrander

The line of her back drew me in first, then her headless body, naked and smooth as a tooth.

"I've got her other arm in the back. You want it?" he asked, some flea market Joe, all scruff and dirty fingernails. I told him I'd take the arm and ran my fingers over the hole in her armpit, felt the space of her missing limb.

The other fleas dug through boxes and bins, searching for gems, elbowing each other for the forgotten broach or the Elvis coasters, but I focused on my mannequin, imagined her standing in my picture window, dressed for the holidays, maybe a little witch number for Halloween, or a string of colored lights for Christmas. I imagined my neighbor, Mrs. Lucy, so old her eyes might crack at the sight of the mannequin in our window, her naked plastic wonder aglow.

My husband, Randy, hardly knew what to think. Our girls, Maggie, nine, and, Ronnie, ten, reached for the mannequin's belly button, slid their hands over her thighs and told me she was the color of milk, and while they liked my holiday plans for her, they wondered what she'd wear on regular days. They argued over who'd dress her tomorrow or next week, so we made a schedule.

"Why does her belly echo?" Maggie asked, her eyes wide as she knocked on the mannequin's ribs, listening for hollow sounds.

"Because she's not real, dummy," Ronnie said, and I felt an argument brewing, so I suggested we name for our mannequin.

"How about Echo?" Maggie said.

One night after the girls had gone to bed, Randy and I were in the living room, by the window, where I hung a new purse from the crook of Echo's arm. I adjusted her hands, made her look happy to stand on display.

"I wonder if it's healthy, you know, having this thing in our window," Randy said.

"The girls love her."

"Love? All they do is fight over her."

"Well maybe that's love."

"So that's it?" Randy said, and I ignored him. I laced a belt around Echo's waist to set off the empire dress I bought for her.

The mornings were the worst. The girls screamed at each other, ripped my blouses from their hangers, telling me Echo rocked my clothes, so I built a new wardrobe for Echo. I cleared out my husband's side of the closet to make room for her dresses and shoes, and I set new rules for the girls. I told them to leave my closet alone.

"But now she only has ugly things to wear," Ronnie whined.

"Experimental, not ugly," I said.

"You do seem to buy her the ugliest clothes," Randy said.

I kept a bag of my skinny clothes in the attic, skirts and pants I hadn't worn in years, not since the girls were born, not since their pregnancies widened my hips and deranged my skin. The night I caught them all in the attic, rummaging through my skinny clothes, pulling out jeans and adorable tops that no longer fit me, I screamed, "Those are my things!"

Randy looked up from the bag first. "They wanted better clothes for Echo," he explained.

So day after day, Echo wore my old dreams. The clothes from my youth hung on her plastic limbs until I moved her to the back porch, where she could see the line of trees teeming with squirrels, or the lawn in need of mowing. Ronnie's eyes brimmed, her fingers tracing Echo's rump, the longing in her voice palpable when she said, "She's invisible back here, Momma."

"No, she's not. Look. From here, she can watch the leaves fall and the squirrels get fat," I said.

But the girls ached for Echo in our living room. Randy missed her, too. He told me so one night when the girls were with my mother. We had the house to ourselves and the best we could do was argue about Echo.

"I think you might be jealous," he said.

"Of that plastic thing?"

"She's more than plastic and you know it," he said.

Eventually, after Echo moved to the back porch, the girls lost interest in her, and my husband mowed the lawn and never brought her up in conversation again. Even Mrs. Lucy stopped wondering what she'd wear next.

The only one who still cared for her was me. In the mornings, after my husband left for work and the girls climbed on the school bus, I'd sit on my back porch with Echo, watching the leaves fall and the squirrels grow fat until piece by piece, I took Echo down. I slid my skinny clothes off of her limbs and threw them in a trash bag; then I twisted her waist until it separated from her perfect legs, and I pulled each arm out their sockets so she'd fit into my station wagon.

I drove us to the flea market and looked for Joe. I gave him my bag of skinny clothes and the heap of Echo's parts.

"Good riddance?" he said.

"I guess it's a good riddance," and from inside the pile of Echo's parts, I saw the line of her back and knew some other woman would pay twenty bucks to put her together again.

[UNTITLED] MOON

— Marc Mannheimer

The Moon was a Matisse cutout
high in the night sky
It's light on the watercolor surfaces of
snow banks lay like a thin wash on rough paper.
The glow kept me focused.

The streets were strewn with antelope
and my feet feel strange and wondrous,
I walked cautiously,
breathing in the salt infused air,
sounds muffled by many layers.

Infused with childish joy and cautious abandon
I noticed the spaces between tree branches expand
but not in league with the advance of time.
and winter never dialogues with me openly.



LANEY AND LAUENDER

— Nicholas Donnellan

one

Hospital corridors are quiet. The doctors and nurses move in silent channels, with nothing but a steady hum and a blinking noise to accompany them. There is wind on the glass. It is salt stained and coated in the morning light. The fifth floor view overlooks the Burlington mall and the business park down the way. Below, the streets are lined with moving cars, pushing yellow lights and stopping short. Being here is not easy for me, but I will always do it for you. Hospitals have always made me uncomfortable. I can hear your heart monitor emitting soft murmurs of peace as you sleep soundly. Your lavender hair is sprawled out in a tangled masterpiece across the pillows. Our soundtrack is the distant drone of the city. Our hands are so cold. I can feel myself drowning in the noise of your heart's rhythm, and I am basking in a brief moment of peace. I am here, and I feel peace. Outside, the wind intensifies. But I feel peace for both of us, and everything is still.

two

Portsmouth is a stunning city. There are little whispers that run through the lines that divide the sidewalk bricks, and the roads are full of mystery. The air is cool, borrowed from the sea and heavy like a clear fog. It's full of empty chairs and shops that nobody ever visits, but it is a bustling place, constantly packed with traffic and impatient people. A burnt red downtown metropolis aching with romantic tension. We exchange the breeze for an unwavering, unrefined restaurant aroma, and I sit down across the table from you. As I stare in your eyes, I begin to laugh. You also begin to laugh. Your smile is wide, and it is a symbol of radiance and a monument to your soul. It stands tall and still, unfazed by the wind. I do not know it yet, but I am having the greatest day of my life, and it is in the reflection of the gaze of the person I love.

three

There is only one lamp in my room. I point it towards the wall to so the light reflects back and softly fills all of the tightly packed corners. Because of how busy I am, my room is a disaster. My clothes are strewn around the floor, in a chaotic medley of freshly washed shirts and dirty socks. I do not have time to worry about these things. My belongings are coated in a dull brown tint, warm and unmoving. All of the things I need are outside of this room, and I leave all of my things on the floor. I have been told that I do not know how to take care of myself. There are two birthday cards that sit on my aging record player that I placed there when I turned twenty. Many people throw things away, but I have never been good at that.

four

Exit 31 has two locations and you live near both of them. One is a long, sweeping hook that ducks out of 495 and into a steep incline leading into Groton. The other is an offshoot of route 3, churning with traffic and spilling into the dimly lit streets of Lowell. Both are traced with red and yellow lights, jumping from speeding vehicles. There is so much motion in you, so much hunger and so much drive. You are the reveries in which I conceal my mind, and you are the red and yellow lights. I frequently find myself drowning in the visions of these places, as I fade in and out of what is considered real. Between the poles that hold up the exit sign, the wind is loud. There is motion in you and everything and everything between everything and you.

five

"Happy birthday, my love! You're a wonderful soul, and I am so thankful to know you! I hope today is everything you asked the universe for. Stay positive; I love you always."

"I'd rather go no place with you than some place with anybody else. You're cute, you make me really happy, and I feel so lucky to be around you and in your life. Love you."

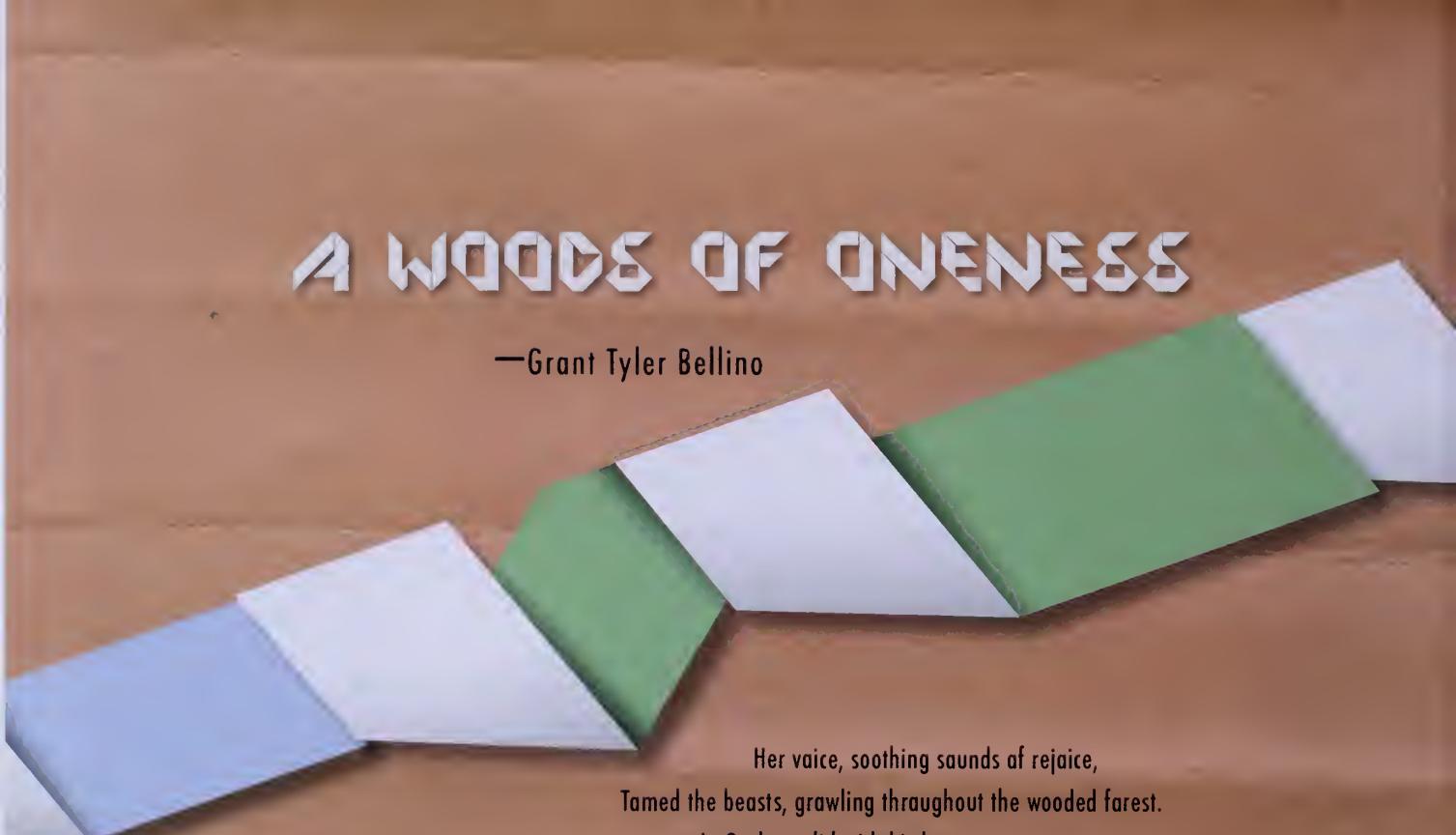
six

Pinehaven is rife with lush, green grass. It's gilded in the grace of its residents, and it sits in a stream of perfect conjunction with the sunlight. In the surrounding trees, there are rumors of a girl with dark lavender hair who used to drag a boy all over Massachusetts, looking for the best way to make him smile. She is popular among these parts, and I was there when she moved in. On the pathway, the faint shimmer of windchimes fills the air. Whenever I am there, we sit together and listen to their song. But there is no wind, and everything is still.



A WOODS OF ONENESS

—Grant Tyler Bellino



Her voice, soothing sounds of rejoice,
Tamed the beasts, growling throughout the wooded forest.

As Orpheus did with his lyre,
When she sang,
She silenced the lions,
And persuaded the bears,
She quieted the woodpeckers,
Offered amnesty to the hares:
And everything was calm full of serenity.

The woods in which the beasts roamed,
Was filled with the warmth of her tone,
Her lyrics hypnotized the woods into a state of nothing.
Removing everything from its illusory state of being

All of the animals became one.
No more carnage, no more cruelty.
Nature was changed,
And it was all from the her enchanting voice,
At peace with a harrowing, unpredictable world.
Her music acted as the string that guided Theseus
It's what keeps the sane at bay with their thoughts of despair and depression.

Oh sweet muse never cease the creation of such wonderful sounds.
And the world shall stay in this state of everything and oneness.



WHERE ARE YOU, WALT WHITMAN?

—Rebecca Westerman

You told me that if I ever lost sight of you,
to look under my boot soles and maybe take a walk.
Well I'm looking frantically with broken glass fromes Wolt,
and you're nowhere to be found.
You told me be loud and omnipresent
but all I feel is small and confused.
I'm screaming as loud as I can from the roof
but it's fallen deaf upon ears.

Who was I trying to reach anyway?

You said you saw God in a blade of grass,
and I've been seeing Him everywhere
and nowhere all at once.

Where are you Walt Whitman?
My feet are tired and I no longer wish to walk.
The road seems too long and empty and there seems to be no grass.

Where are you Walt Whitman?

I've been shouting for you for days,
Atop the roofs you pondered and my vocal cords are strained.

These boots I've been looking under hold nothing of certainty,
they hold no truths or comfort because it seems you've deserted me.

1 MILLION WORDS

— Kim Whiting

A hundred words, a thousand, a million,
Each one a tiny piece of me.
I throw them onto the page
For examination, or enlightenment,
Or relief. To purge them.
I spit them out so they can
No longer make me sick
I lay them down like bread crumbs
And ask them to show me the way.
A thought, a dream, a memory,
Like tears they fall from my eyes
And my mind.
Painfully, one at a time
Or a deluge that floods the page
With jumbled confusion.
A tool, a weapon, a beast to be tamed.
Once I master these creatures, these words
I can bend them to my will,
And they will do my bidding.



— Noah Greenstein

WAISTLINE

—Shauna Matthieu

24.5"

"Who's next for hair and makeup?!" a designer shouts. The room is wide and brightly lit, and it is filled to the brim with skin-covered skeletons. Large eyes pop out of bony skulls, eagerly. Mr. designer scans the room, emptily.

What you see is not always what you get.

24"

A scantily clad model stares angrily into the city street from a billboard. She is probably wondering how long she has to stand there in those heels, and when she will have time to eat the broken granola bar that is crushed amongst hair brushes and photo books in her model bag.

23.5"

What is that smell? It's tacky and tangible. It tickles the nose hairs in an uncomfortable sort of way. It smells fake, whatever it is. It smells like make believe, like a facade.

23"

Click, click, click. A photographer stands at the end of the empty runway trying to find just the right angles for the show. Glitter particles fall through the air onto the walk, and nervous words travel to the dressing room. It will be slippery, scuff your shoes.

22.5"

Most girls go to castings in skinny jeans, black stilettos and a cami, but there are the overconfident ones that wear hoop earrings and a dress from Saks. There's all sorts of suggestions that go around about how to look, what will leave the best impression.

The tape measure doesn't care either way. The tape measure is blind.

22"

"Where should I change?" says a newbie girl, about 14.
A topless girl strides by, waiting for her wardrobe.

21.5"

They're rich. Filthy rich. They come in wearing furs and laughing forcedly. They sit in the front row, the glitter touching their unimpressed toes. They squint their eyes judging every little seam.
All they see is clothes.

20.5"

"If you want to go to New York you'll have to lose an inch off your hips" she says. Her brown eyes size me up saying, "tsk tsk."
I wonder how much it costs to shave off an inch of bone.

20"

"Oh my gosh look at the models!" people say. "Oh my gosh, you're so tall!" people say. "Oh my gosh, I wish I looked like that!" people say. "Oh my gosh, can I get a picture?" people say.

"Of course!" we reply, "any day!"
Our mouths they smile, our eyes say go away.

19.5"

A maintenance man sweeps up the remnants of the glitter. The audience has left, but the models remain, backstage. One sits in her underwear as a stylist unweaves the coils in her hair. She chomps on a granola bar. All of the glitter and glamour have been stripped away.
Only her eyes remain. But her eyes, they fade.

WHAT IS THE AMERICAN DREAM?

— Yulinda Garcia

I know it's something we've heard of -
But has anyone ever really felt it -
seen it or touched an American dream?

I wonder if the dream is a legacy or is it like a rainbow that can easily reached.

Maybe?

Is it a river full of fish or aisles full of necessities?

Could it be the finest wheels I ride or is it the sensation of having everything conveniently having everything super-sized and never being satisfied?

That would be sweet.

Is the American dream really for the great or is it only a place of injustice?
Perhaps, the American dream is hands up – don't shoot if I say I can't breathe... would you believe me?

Maybe the American dream is for the fortunate who rob and steal from those less fortunate
So they can eat, drink, and live in homes with settled waiters and doubled gold plated doors.

It could be,
A hand out from a bailout scheme or how we are being killed softly... May I see your insurance please?

I ask, American dream a reality publicity stunt- that values you based on how many likes and comments one gets- from a place where everybody knows my name.

I know- the American dream is for those who live in the hood, where we gather around for cyphers to rhyme rap out of context in skinny low jeans and set up trap houses, while some of us practice motor learning skills - perfect their lay up, so you can cross over to the drafts- Double up it's game time.

I once thought the American dream was about a man and woman who meet; once they have completed a degree, build a roof over their smart heads, to grow nicely gardens and repeats.

Wait... Ahh yes,

I think I caught up with the American dream once upon a time. A long, long time ago when the divorce was final; right before the layoff, a little after the bank foreclosed my home and survived on taxpayers' dollars.

I think?

On the other hand an American dream could be a forbidden love over ruled by justice- just for the sakes of.

Really now?

Now we are literally created equally; not by the color of our skin, not by the patriotism of those who go on the front line to bleed red, white, and blue.

But by those who were born indifferent; out the closet- love wins!

Nah, America is the shit- literally and symbolically land of the free!

Where hope keeps everyone alive because you do you and I do me.

We have the freedom of speech. We have justice that protects and serves. We have the land of equal opportunity that allows us to express our sexuality, talents, skills and capabilities to shine freely, whether you agree.

In God we trust that's a must. We are living in obvious times now - make sure your status states you lived up!

Oh my, would you look at that.

It looks as though anyone can feel, touch, and hear an American dream.

Just as long as you don't speak out freely or you will be shot dead- legally.

The American dream.







— Jay Bellino

The city was enveloped in panic, its every resident running in desperation. What do people do when faced with their demise? Try to avoid it, of course. Their efforts were futile, however. No amount of running or hiding would shield them against the doom that now hurtled itself towards them. They were to be ground zero; the end would begin with them. Amidst the chaos, however, there was one soul who was different. While everyone dashed about frantically, he was focused. Clutching a bouquet of flowers in his hands, he was in search of something – someone. His heart now held what had withered in others: hope.

A great light shined brilliantly in the sky. Dwarfing the sun, it grew bigger and bigger with each passing moment, racing toward a bitter and cataclysmic embrace with the Earth.

He ran, dodging other people on their own Doomsday missions. His feet carried him quicker now than they had ever done in his life, with a determination he had never known. What drove him was not the fear of death; it was something else. Fate had laced his drink with courage, and he would not allow himself to squander its effects. Nothing else mattered now except for this one thing, and the fireball in the sky ticked away the precious little time he had left.

His anticipation grew, as did the light in the sky; he would say the words he had barred from the world so many times before, lacking them away in the deepest

sepulcher of his heart. He would say how he had felt all along, and not even the cold tendrils of death would be able to rob him of that comfort.

People on the street kneeled and prayed to God for mercy. Some took to looting, while others sought a safe place to hide. He traversed the panicked ocean of bodies, jumping from car hood to car hood and avoiding the torrent of people. All the while, a smile sat unyielding on his face despite the terror that infected his surroundings. As he ran, he remembered how his life had been spent. He had always allowed himself to sit back idly and watch events unfold, not as a direct result of his actions but by mere chance and coincidence. In silence he sat, never raising a word of protest as people passed him by. Now was his time, though, he thought, and what a time: the end of times.

The ball of fire in the sky grew larger still, emitting a warm, red light that belied its ominous intent. Squinting, he ran across the packed street and suddenly collided with another person, his face smashing into the stranger's shoulder. They both fell back onto the concrete. The stranger was quick to get up and hurry along to his own end, but he lay back on

THE WORLD ENDS WITH YOU

— Edgar Eli Linan

the floor. His vision came in and out of focus as his brain attempted to settle itself inside his skull. Blood from his brow began to pool in his eyes, drenching the frantic scene in tones of a hellish red. As he convalesced, habit wrapped a welcoming arm around him. "Don't worry about it..." habit began. "Just let it go."

He felt his body tremble and weaken as cracks began to form on his resolve. Suddenly, his eyes landed on the bouquet of flowers he had been carrying all this time. They sat underneath a car, dirtied and trampled by hostile feet. However forlorn the situation seemed, the flowers still beamed with a certain beauty, brimming with the hope of reaching their intended destination.

"No," he uttered, as he managed to get onto his hands and knees, shaking off habit and wiping away the hell from his eyes. His hands reached out to the flowers, but they came under attack by desperate feet trying to carve out a path to salvation. He winced at the pain, but he continued to reach nonetheless until his crippled hands wrapped around the flowers. He struggled to his feet, and amidst shoves and yells, he limped his way down the street towards his destiny.

A terrible ripping sound resonated through the air as the monolith in the sky roared through the atmosphere. Doing his best to maintain his bearing in the chaos, he finally came upon what he was looking for. He limped toward the second building on his right, blood and sweat dripping over his smile, his grip on the flowers tighter than ever.

The clouds in the sky parted to make way for Earth's demise as he climbed the steps of the building and burst through the front door of the apartment. He rushed into the living room, his whole body twitching with excitement, readying itself to fulfill this final and all-important mission. His eyes glistened with tears as he began to piece together in his mind the words he would say. His whole life had built up to this one moment.

As he entered the living room, he came to a sudden halt; his smile gave way and crumbled into a grimace as his eyes beheld the source of his hope and courage wrapping her arms around another man. Her fiery red head slowly and passionately neared this intruder's face and their lips met, one of her hands clutching a beautiful bouquet of flowers.

His grip on the sullied bouquet that had been intended for his love grew limp, and the flowers tumbled to the ground. His body grew numb, and he could do nothing but stare at them silently as they embraced. The words that had longed to see the light of day were now cruelly stuck in his mouth, the closest they would come to ever being spoken.

The couple stood lost in their moment of passion, while simultaneously imprisoning him in it. The Earth suddenly shook, and a blinding flash blotted through the windows and chaos wrapped itself around everything. He felt nothing, though; the world had ended.



– Danielle Staunuchenski



— Adam Dergan

VEGAN

—Marc Mannheimer

The Ocean is electronic
it fizzles and bubbles with free electrons
that never reach full potential,
always recycling effortlessly
as the flock serves their insatiable desires.

And the glaring, beautiful rust of
the canyon looms,
unseen in the distance.

The echo is pervasive,
we are here for you,
take your feathers,
your unbridled worth
and in return satisfy the depth of your
loneliness,
even though you see the repetition,
the convoluted space
that beckons like harpies for your being,
immortal as long as the fossils will fuel.

While we pursue the promise
and breathe in their diodes,
bathe in the waves of efflorescence
till sleep eventually arrives.



I walked walked that fine line of
silence, that tightrope of hope
but I suppose being a trapeze artist was
never my forte, not my expertise.
I walked it anyways and the ropes cut
into the soles of my calloused feet,
I felt the sting but for some strange
reason

it was a more bearable torment,
a more tolerable bite.
I kept walking.
But finally about halfway across that
weird gray area of complete indecision
and tongue tied musings
I took a deep breath,
and simply stepped off that rope.

TIGHTROPE OF HOPE

— Rebecca Westerman

I forgot.
I forgot.
I forgot
the taste
of the
g
round.



— Jay Bellino

SiOS

JESSICA ANGELINI is an Honors Student Ambassador at NECC. She aspires to be an English Literature professor and has been largely inspired by the professors at NECC. She is passionate about storytelling in its many forms: music, film, literature, and video games. She enjoys seeing with a new perspective each time she experiences a new story, and hopes that through her writing she is able to allow others a glimpse through her lens.

GRANT TYLER BELLINO is a philosophy major at NECC. He is an interesting fellow to be around: never a boring moment when he is in one's presence. He will be graduating from NECC after the fall semester, then transferring to a four year school. Writing of his travels along the way.

JAY BELLINO, often confused with Jay Z, Jay-lo, and Jerry Garcia, is a simple artist who has dedicated their life to drawing fan art for the relatively unknown 60's sci-fi novel *Dune*. When not creating *Dune* fan art, they work at a crystal shop and has dreams of living in a tree house.

SARAH COURCHESNE is a veterinarian, vegetarian, professor of natural sciences, mom of two, wife of one, New Englander, science geek, runner, reader, writer, insatiable outdoorsperson, and susceptible to broad, multi-disciplinary enthusiasms.

NICHOLAS JAMES DONNELAN is a poet, lyricist, and musician. He enjoys making people smile, creating and performing loud music, and going on adventures. He thinks there is beauty and grace in all things, and is thankful for every passing moment.

ADAM DORGAN is a photographer and artist of many talents, working at improving and creating

new works constantly. Since graduating from Peabody Veterans Memorial High School in 2000, his goal has been making a career in art by working towards owning a studio in the future. The view he takes is anyone can be a model for photography, and bringing that out is one of the joys he obtains from art including prop making, leather working, drawing, painting, costume making, jewelry, and a neverending interest in all other forms of art. Recently he collaborated on painting a shoe sculpture on the grounds of NECC.

MILIE DUFORD is a smiley, bright eyed, open-minded student who makes the best of every situation. She has a love for shooting and manipulating photographs, and in the near future she hopes to take the role of a high school math teacher. Her goal in her future profession, and in life in general, is to inspire others with her passion and enthusiasm she puts into all of her work.

PAIGE FOURNIER is a 21 year old student presently attending NECC. In her spare time, she tries to scrape meaning out of life by making art.

YUNILDA GARCIA is a Dominican/American who is the youngest of 17 sisters and three brothers. Yunilda grew up in one of the most diverse boroughs: the sixth borough of L.E.S Manhattan. Yunilda went from child care, beauty school, MC, therapeutic mentor to now an exercise physiology major. Yunilda considers herself to be a renaissance female. Her hustle is tough and her swag is outstanding. She is an inspiring, optimistic, confident, classy, and well-educated through the books and streets that says the "F" word a lot. She is currently working on not saying the "F" word a lot. Yunilda has stumbled, but she gets back up for the reason that staying down has never an option for her. Yunilda remains

undefeated because she is a fighter. Yunilda has never written about herself in the third person. Now Yunilda cannot say she never wrote in a third person form.

Winner of multiple photography awards, **NOAH GREENSTEIN** is a 20 year-old student at NECC. Majoring in the Arts, he hopes to blend his artistic and technical talents. Noah uses his digital photography skills to reflect the beauty and personality of the region. His photos often provide thoughtful views of common sites and landmarks. He is comfortable with black and white and color formats. Noah has been a contributor to the *Town Transcript* newspaper for several years with images that capture local people and popular events. Noah is also an actor, theatre technician, and stage manager for several area theatre programs where he is able to share his creative ideas

and skills with audiences through live theatre.

CHAD GORHAM is currently following his dream as a writer. He is in the process of writing his memoir. He is a double major at NECC, studying Journalism and Writing. While attending NECC he has served on the Student Senate as Treasurer, Vice President of Haverhill, and is the current President. He also works on the school newspaper at the Campus Life Editor. He is also the NECC Knight.

GINGER HURAJT teaches writing and literature at NECC. Sometimes she writes poetry.

JOSE SAM JOSEART is a fine arts major at NECC. He currently designs custom t-shirts and vinyl, when he has free time. He also does photography sculptures, and studies ancient history and horoscope astrology.

ENGAR ELI LIMAN is a self-proclaimed writer out of Lawrence, MA who spends the bulk of his time training his writing hand to stay ahead of his stream of consciousness. He is

currently majoring in Liberal Arts: Writing; he hopes to go on to teach English someday as well as publish anything that he fancies to be "good enough." Ultimately he's just another romantic on a perpetual quest to find the words that complete him, while attempting to make a living out the ones that don't.

Silence is YERELYN LOPEZ's solace, darkness is her friend, and solitude is her companion. In constant turmoil between fantasy and reality, she ceases motion and stares at the nothing. Music is her source of inspiration.

MARC MANNHEIMER is a Professor of Art at NECC who has been writing poetry for a number of years and greatly enjoys this method of expressing his thoughts and feelings.

SHARON MATTIEU is a hard working student who works full time as a nanny. She enjoys spending time with family and friends. She has a history of fashion modeling and acting, but

is now pursuing a career in Early Childhood Education. She has a passion for art, literature, and writing.

HELEN SHIRE is a general studies art major. She enjoys doing photography, drawing, and painting. She will be transferring to the Salve Regina University for fall 2016. There she will be a studio arts painting major and a psychology minor. She wants to be an art therapist in the near future.

KEVIN STANLEY is an avid penner of monsters, creatures, and less-than-human folk, with spooks, ghouls, and horrors almost perpetually flowing from his pens into whatever little doodle book he has on hand.

The other day, **DANIELLE STRAUCHENSKI**'s friend asked her why she chose art. She did not know how to respond, and while she was thinking of a response, her mom quickly replied saying, "Art chose her; she did not choose art." And she was right. Danielle is an artist. When she was growing up learning was very tough. This made her feel overwhelmed and she did not make any friends, yet when she drew, painted, and created objects out of paper towels, she felt joy. Art was the one thing that she knew she had a passion for, without falling into the void of nothingness. All through her life, art flecks everything she does to writing, picking out her outfits, and in her personality.

KATHERINE STONE lives in Salem, New Hampshire with her husband and two dogs. She has

attended NECC since 2006 and has three degrees from the college. Photography is one of her many passions, as well as image manipulation through Photoshop. Katherine also enjoys website development, the great outdoors, and is a true animal lover.

CLARE THOMPSON-OSTRANNER has been writing short stories for years and years. She also teaches writing courses at NECC. She feels honored to work with her NECC students each day. Her students inspire her to keep writing stories. She is grateful to Parnassus for making it possible for others to read her stories, too.

CHRIS WALL is a young author working towards a teaching degree in history. He's currently working on a novel and writing short stories such as the one in this issue. His one true dream is to write a story worthy of the big screen, or even the stage. A story accepted into Parnassus is just what he needs to make himself better known.

REBECCA WESTERMAN is your average waitress/college student with a passion for writing and literature. She enjoys crying over sappy books and movies, and spills her heart into her own words for others to maybe relate and cry with her when life gets too real. In her spare time, she likes to read Stephan Crane and think too much. She also loves nature and exploring the natural world on the back of her soul mate/equine partner Fox. The best nights are those she can drive around aimlessly and think about the Universe, and ponder her own existence. Did she mention she gets too deep like, all the time? Anyway, she hopes you can get some enjoyment from her heartbreak and existential crises; she's never giving up on the written word.

KIM WHITING returned to school because she was sick and tired of doing jobs that make other people rich. She is hoping to use her talent for nosiness to build a career in journalism and plans to travel the world writing about all of the interesting things in it. She hopes to eventually write novels, from home, in her pajamas.

CRYSTAL WILLETT is 19 years old, from Haverhill, Massachusetts, and a psychology major at NECC. She has always loved helping others and that is mainly why she chose the path she did. She loves to write and draw, work at Market Basket, and hopes to pursue a wonderful career in the future. She loves math and English and is very kind towards others. She loves cats and dragons, is weird and quirky and everything in between, and her mind is open to so many possibilities.

parnassus staff

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how to contribute

Submissions to *Parnassus* are limited to NECC students, staff, and faculty, with two deadlines per year. We accept submissions in the areas of art, photography, fiction, poetry, and creative non fiction. We want the best, and we know you've got it. Entries are reviewed and chosen democratically each semester by the staff and faculty advisor. Deadlines are announced online and around campus, and *Parnassus* is published at the end of each spring, sometimes during the summer, and occasionally at the beginning of fall. Creative people are like that sometimes. Full information on how to submit your potentially famous work can be found within our oh-so-accessible website:

www.parnassuslitmag.org

We look forward to reading and viewing what you send us! Any questions or comments are encouraged – please send them along to faculty advisor Patrick Lochelt: plochelt@necc.mass.edu

Many thanks as always to all of our supporters, submitters, and readers for another great year. We couldn't do this without you!



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